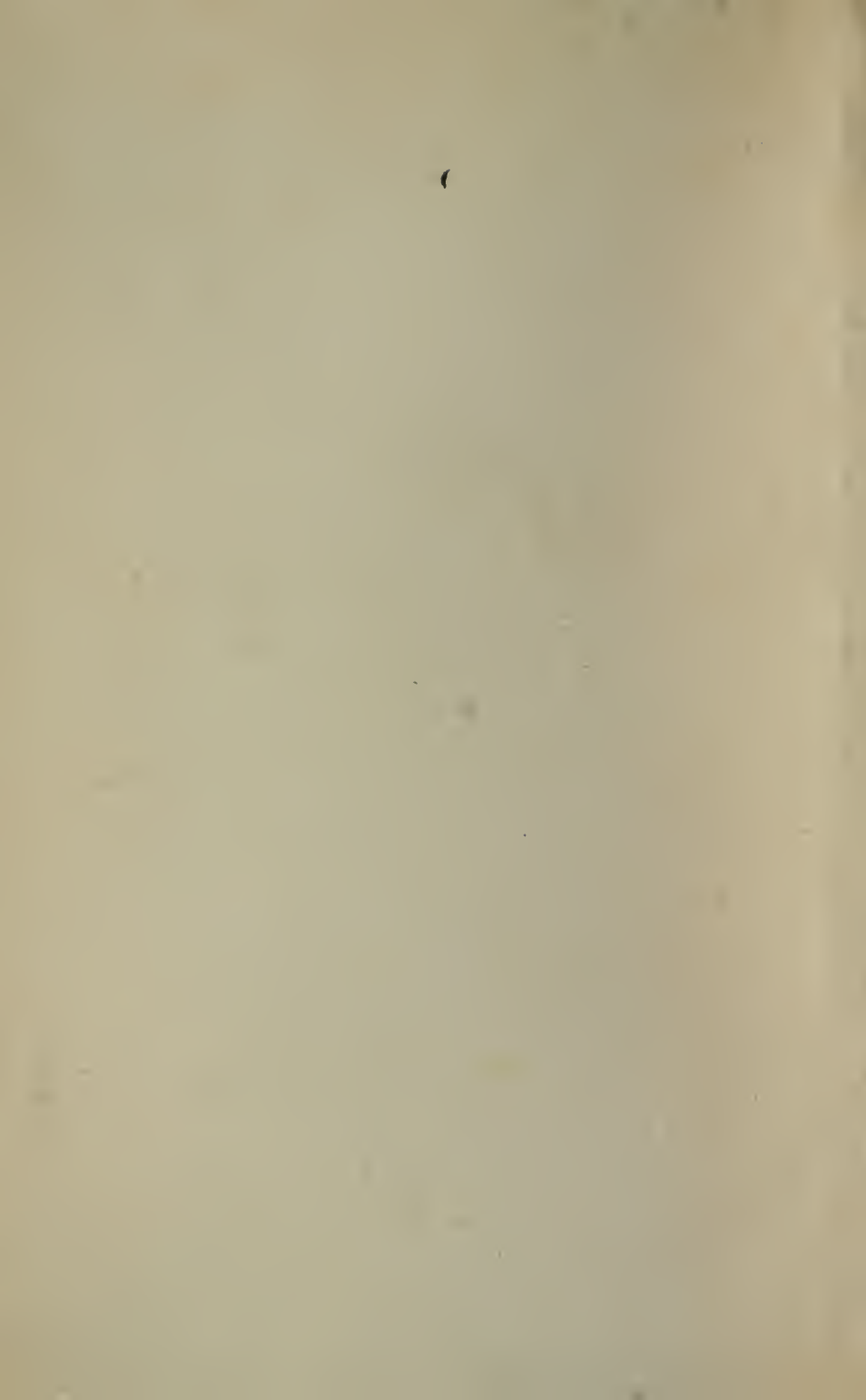




3 1761 07837507 8

#18033A



GREIFENSTEIN



GREIFENSTEIN

BY

F. MARION CRAWFORD

AUTHOR OF 'MR. ISAACS,' 'DR. CLAUDIUS,' 'A ROMAN SINGER.,'
'ZOROASTER,' 'A TALE OF A LONELY PARISH,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I

London

MACMILLAN AND CO.

AND NEW YORK

1889

All rights reserved

COPYRIGHT

1889

BY

F. MARION CRAWFORD



1101161

PS
1455
G7
1839
v. 1

TO
Luther Terry

TO WHOSE
TRIED FRIENDSHIP AND CONSTANT AFFECTION

I OWE SO MUCH
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

SORRENTO, *February* 1889.

CHAPTER I

32 FRAU VON SIGMUNDSKRON was not really much past middle age, though the people in the village generally called her the old baroness. Her hair was very white and she was thin and pale; her bold features, almost emaciated, displayed the framework of departed beauty, and if her high white forehead and waxen face were free from lines and wrinkles, it must have been because time and grief could find no plastic material there in which to trace their story. She was a very tall woman, too, and carried her head erect and high, walking with a firmness and elasticity of step such as would not have been expected in one whose outward appearance conveyed so little impression of strength. It is true that she had

never been ill in her life and that her leanness was due to the most natural of all causes ; but these facts were not patent to the observer, and for reasons which will presently appear she herself would have been the last to mention them. There was something, too, in the look of her blue eyes, shaded by long brown lashes which had retained their colour, that forbade any expression of sympathy. The least experienced of mankind would have seen at a glance that she was the proudest of women, and would have guessed that she must be one of the most reticent. She moved and spoke as though Sigmundskron were still what it had been in former days, and she had brought up her only child to be as much like herself, as it was possible that anything so young and fair could resemble what was already a type of age and gravity.

Poverty is too insignificant a word to describe the state in which the mother and daughter lived, and had lived for many years. They had no means of subsistence whatever beyond the pension accorded to

the widow of Lieutenant von Sigmundskron, 'fallen on the field of honour,' as the official report had expressed it, in the murderous war with France. He had been the last of his name and at the time of his death had no relations living; two years earlier he had married a girl as penniless and as noble as himself, and had lived to see a daughter born, destined to inherit his nobility, his penury, and the bare walls of his ancestral home.

Sigmundskron had been a very grand castle in its day, and the half-ruined walls of the old stronghold still rose majestically from the summit of the crag. Indeed the ruin was more apparent than real as yet, and a few thousands judiciously expended upon the masonry would have sufficed to restore the buildings to their original completeness. Many a newly enriched merchant or banker would have paid a handsome price for the place, though the land was gone and the government owned the forest up to the very foot of the rock. But the Lady of Sigmundskron would

rather have starved to death in her vaulted chamber than have taken half the gold in Swabia to sign away her dead husband's home. Moreover, there was Greif, and Greif was to marry Hilda, after which all would be well again. Greif, with his money, would build and restore and furnish the old castle, and bring back the breath of life into the ancient halls and corridors. But in order that Greif might marry Hilda, it was necessary that Hilda should grow up beautiful, and to grow up at all, it was necessary that Hilda should be fed.

It had come to that, to the very question of food, of mere bread to eat. There was not enough for two, but Hilda must not starve. That was the secret which no one, not even Hilda herself must ever understand. During the first years, it had not been so hard to live. There had been a few poor jewels to sell, a few odds and ends that had brought a little money. While Hilda was a little child it had been easier, for she had needed but few clothes and, being little, had needed to eat less. But at

last there had come a day when Frau von Sigmundskron, not so thin nor so pale as now, had seen a hungry look stealing into the eyes of the fair-haired girl. It was little enough that they had between them, but the mother said to herself that she could keep alive with less. The careful economy which bought nothing not capable of sustaining life and strength could go no further. There were but so many pence a day for food, and to expend more to-day was to starve to-morrow. From that moment Frau von Sigmundskron began to complain of headache, and especially of loss of appetite. She could not eat, she said. She did not think there was anything the matter, and she would doubtless be better in a few days. But the days ran on to weeks, the weeks to months, and the months to years, and Hilda grew tall and fair, unconsciously eating her mother's portion of the daily bread. No hermit ever lived upon so little as sufficed for the baroness; no perishing, shipwrecked wretch ever measured out so carefully the ounce of

biscuit that must maintain life from day to day; no martyr ever submitted more patiently and silently to his sufferings. But Hilda grew, and the years sped on, and Greif would come in time.

Greif, upon whom such great hopes were centred, was a distant cousin as well as a neighbour. The relationship was on the side of Hilda's mother, whose grandfather had been a Greifenstein, and who might have been expected to accept some assistance from her rich connexions, especially as she was quite willing that her daughter should marry their only son. But the baroness was a woman whose pride forbade her to accept under the pressure of necessity what had not been offered freely in other times. It must be admitted also that the Greifensteins, though well aware that the Sigmundskrons were extremely poor, were far from suspecting that they were in need of bread. They knew that the castle was still the unhampered property of the two ladies, and they supposed that if things were really in a bad state, the baroness would

raise money upon it. She never alluded to her affairs when she was with her relations, and excused herself from asking them to stay with her, on the ground of her poor health. On rare occasions Greifenstein and his wife drove over to the castle, and were invariably admitted by the same soberly-dressed, middle-aged woman, who showed them into the same old-fashioned room, whence, having made their visit, they returned to the outer gate by the way they had come. That is all they ever saw of Sigmundskron. Twice in the year, also, Hilda and her mother were invited to stay a fortnight at Greifenstein, but no one would have supposed from their behaviour that the luxury of the latter place surprised them, or seemed in any way preferable to what they enjoyed at home. Hilda's education had not been neglected. Among her earliest recollections was her mother's constant injunction never to make remarks upon what she saw in other houses. The child was not long in learning what the warning meant, and as she had inherited a

plentiful share of her mother's pride she almost unconsciously imitated her mother's behaviour. Greif himself was the only person who might have known something of the true state of the case ; but as he had been accustomed to be in love with his cousin ever since they had been children he would have feared to hurt her feelings by asking questions. For Hilda was reticent even with him, not from any shame at the idea of being thought poor, but because she was too proud to have it thought that either she or her mother could ever need the help of the Greifensteins.

Furthermore, if the baroness's reluctance to ask for assistance has not been sufficiently explained, there is one more consideration which might alone have sufficed to account for her conduct. Between her and Greif's mother there existed a great and wholly insurmountable antipathy. She could not understand how Greifenstein could have married such a woman. There was a mystery about it which she had never fathomed. Greifenstein himself was a stern, silent man

of military appearance, a mighty hunter in the depths of the forest, a sort of grizzled monument of aristocratic strength, tough as leather, courteous in his manner, with that stiff courtesy that never changes under any circumstances, rigid in his views, religious, loyal, full of the prejudices that make the best subjects in a kingdom and the bitterest opponents of all change.

In appearance and manner Frau von Greifenstein presented the most complete contrast to her husband. She had been pretty, fair and sprightly in her youth, she was now a faded blonde, full of strange affectations and stilted sentiments. Possessing but indifferent taste, she nevertheless devoted much time to the adornment of her person. She was small of stature, but delicately made, and if her nervous desire to please had granted to her outward personality a moment's repose during the day, she might still have passed muster as a fairly good-looking woman. Unfortunately she was animated by an unceasing activity in trivial matters, and was rarely silent.

Some women make one think of a printed page in which there are too many italics, and too many useless marks of exclamation. At first, their constant cries of admiration and outbursts of enthusiasm produce a vague sense of uneasiness in the listener, which soon develops to a feeling of positive distress and generally ends in a real and deep-rooted dislike. At the beginning one looks about anxiously for the object which could produce so grotesque a smile. There is nothing, for the conversation has been as lead, but the smile does not subside ; it only passes through the endless variations that succeed each other from the inane grin to the affected simper which is meant to be tender. The whole face moves perpetually, as the facial muscles of a corpse, excited by an electric current, seem to parody all the expression of living human sentiment.

But Frau von Greifenstein was not in reality so foolish as might have been thought. Her silliness was superficial. One part of her life had been full of strange circumstances, and if the whole truth were

told it would appear that she had known how to extract a large amount of personal advantage from situations which to many persons would have seemed hopeless. She and her husband rarely left their castle in the Black Forest, and it might naturally be supposed that their life there was exceedingly dull and monotonous. In her own heart Clara von Greifenstein recognised that her present luxurious retirement was a paradise compared with the existence she must have led if she had not known how to help herself at the right moment. During the earlier years of her marriage, the recollection of her antecedents had been so painful as to cause her constant anxiety, and at one time she had even gone so far as to keep a sum of money about her, as though expecting to make a sudden and unexpected journey. But five and twenty years and more had passed, without bringing any untoward incident, and she felt herself very secure in her position. Moreover a son had been born to her and was growing up to be very like his father.

Without Greif there is no knowing what turn affairs might have taken, for although Clara's husband maintained towards her the same stiffly considerate behaviour which had always characterised him in their relations to each other, he certainly admitted to himself that she was not growing old gracefully; and it is even possible that, in some remote glen of the forest, his grave features may have occasionally allowed themselves a look of sorrowful regret, or even of actual repugnance, when he thought of his wife's spasmodic smiles and foolish talk. Possibly, too, he may have sometimes speculated upon her probable condition before she had married her first husband, for he himself had found her a widow of apparently little more than five and twenty years of age. But if any suggestion at all derogatory to Greifenstein had presented itself to his mind, his pride would assuredly have lost no time in smothering the thought. Was she not the mother of Greif? And besides, if all were to be told, was there not an unpleasantly dark spot in his own family,

in the shape of his half-brother, Kuno von Rieseneck? Indeed the existence of Kuno von Rieseneck, concerning whom Clara knew nothing, was the reason why Greifenstein had lived for so many years in the country, only travelling outside of Germany when he travelled at all. He wondered that his wife, being ignorant of the story, should be willing to share the solitude of the Black Forest without a murmur, and her submission in itself suggested that she, too, might have some good cause for preferring a retired life. But if he had been satisfied with what he knew of her five and twenty years ago, he was not the man to allow himself any dissatisfaction now that Clara was the mother of that stalwart young fellow who was heir to all the Greifenstein property.

In the month of July Greif was to come home from the University, and immediately afterwards Hilda and her mother were to come over for their half-yearly visit. The ancient place where this family meeting was convened was so unlike most

castles as to deserve a word of description.

The Swabian Black Forest is literally black, save when the winter snow is heavy on the branches of the huge trees and lies in drifts beneath them, covering the soft carpet of fir needles to the depth of many feet. The landscape is extremely melancholy and in many parts is absolutely monotonous. At intervals of several miles the rock juts suddenly out of the forest, generally at places where the Nagold, more a torrent than a river, makes a sharp bend. Many of these steep and stony promontories are crowned by ancient strongholds, chiefly in ruins, though a very few are still in repair and are inhabited by their owners. The name of Greifenstein will not be found on any map of the district, but those who know that wild and unfrequented country will recognise the spot. The tumbling stream turns upon itself at a sharp angle, swirling round the base of a precipitous and wedge-like cliff. So steep are the sides that they who chose the summit for a fortress

saw no need of building any protection, save one gigantic wall which bestrides the wedge of rock, thus cutting off a triangular platform, between the massive bulwark and the two precipices that meet at the apex of the figure. This single fortification is a solid piece of masonry, enormously thick and of great height; its two extremities being surmounted by pointed towers, connected by a covered walk along the top of the wall, which, even at that height, is fully six feet wide and nearly a hundred in length. This was the rampart behind which the Greifensteins had dwelt in security through many generations, in the stormy days of the robber barons. So sure were they of their safety, that they had built their dwelling-place on the other side of the bulwark in a manner that offered no suggestion of war or danger. The house was Gothic in style, full of windows and ornamented with spacious balconies and much fine stonework. The three-cornered platform was converted into a flower-garden, surrounded by a parapet. Protected on

the north side by the huge wall, and fully exposed to the southern sun, the plants throve in an almost artificial spring, and in the summer jets of water played in the marble basins and cooled the hot, pine-scented air.

One narrow gate, barely wide enough for two persons to pass abreast, gave access to this paradise through the grey, windowless mass of masonry by which it was separated from the melancholy forest without. One small building only was visible on the side of the woods, scarcely fifty yards from the gate. This was a small, square, stone tower, half overgrown with brush and creepers, and evidently abandoned to decay. It was known in the family and neighbourhood as the 'Hunger-Thurm,' or Hunger Tower, as having been used as a place for starving prisoners to death, in the fine old days when the lords of Greifenstein did as they judged good in their own eyes. Frau von Sigmundskron used to look curiously at the grey building when she was staying with her relations. She could have de-

scribed the sufferings of the poor wretches who had perished there as well as any one of themselves or better. Not twenty miles from all the luxury that dwelt behind that lofty bulwark, she had been starving herself for years in order that her only child might live. And yet the well-fed woodmen touched their caps and their rosy wives and daughters curtsied to the 'Lady Baroness' who, as they told each other, spent her life in the towers of Sigmundskron hoarding untold wealth which would one day belong to the golden-haired Lady Hilda. They knew, for the knowledge could not be kept from them and their kind, how very few were the silver pieces which were ever seen in the hands of old Berbel, when she came down to the village market to buy food, and they naturally concluded that the baroness was a miser even like some of themselves, keeping her store of gold in a broken teapot somewhere among those turrets in a spot known only to the owls. It is also possible that Berbel—her name was Barbara—encouraged the idea, think-

ing it better that her beloved mistresses should be thought avaricious than poor. The burgomaster of the hamlet, who had to take off his coat in order to sign his name when that momentous operation was unavoidable, but who was supposed to know vastly more than the schoolmaster, used to talk about certain mines in Silesia, owned by the Sigmundskrons; and once or twice he went so far as to assure his hearers that gold and even diamonds were found there in solid blocks as big as his own Maass-Krug, that portentous jug from which he derived inspiring thoughts for conversation, or peaceful satisfaction in solitude, as the case might be. All, however, agreed in predicting that things would go much better when the young gentleman of Greifenstein was married to the young lady of Sigmundskron.

On that warm afternoon in July when Greif was expected, his father took his gun, though there was little to shoot at that season, and sallied forth on foot along the broad road that led to the distant rail-

way station. The portly gatekeeper smiled pleasantly as he stood looking after his master. For many years, whenever the student was to come home, old Greifenstein had gone down that road, in the same way, without a word to any one, but having that same twinkle of happy anticipation in his eyes, which was never seen there at any other time. Very generally, too, the laden carriage came rumbling up to the gate with Greif's belongings, and an hour or two passed before father and son emerged on foot from the first trees of the forest. To-day also, the master had started betimes and it would be long before he heard the horses' bells below him in the valley. He walked quickly, as active men do when they are alone, and there is no one to hinder them, stopping now and then to see which way a hare sprang, or pausing to listen when his quick ear caught the distant tread of a buck. He knew that he might walk for miles without meeting a human being. The road was his, the land was his, the trees were his. There was no felling

to be done in the neighbourhood, and no one but himself or his men had any right to be prowling about the woods. In the perfect solitude his features relaxed a little and their expression changed. The glad anticipation of the meeting with his son was still in his eyes, but in the rest of his face there was a weary look which those who knew him best would not have recognised. He was thinking how different life would seem if Greif and he were to be the only inhabitants of the old home during the next dozen years. Then he stiffened his neck suddenly and strode on.

At last the far off tinkling of bells came up to him from the depths of the forest, with the dull thud of horses' hoofs that echoed among the trees. He quickened his pace, knowing at how great a distance the sounds could be heard. Ten minutes elapsed before the carriage came in sight, and then almost instantly a loud shout rang through the woods, followed by an answer from old Greifenstein, deeper, but quite as strong.

‘Father!’

‘ Greif ! ’

Greif had leaped down from his place and was running up the hill at a pace that would have tried the horses. In a moment more the two tall men were in each other’s arms, kissing each other on the cheek.

At three and twenty the student looked as much like his father as a young and fair man can look like an elderly dark one. Their features were the same, both had the same sinewy firmness of build and the same eyes ; but Greif’s close-cut golden hair and delicate moustache gave him a brilliancy his father had never possessed. He seemed to bring the light with him into the deep shade of the glen where they met. One looking at him would have felt instinctively that he was made to wear the gleaming uniform of a Prussian Lifeguard, rather than the sober garments of a civilian. As a matter of fact, he was dressed like an Englishman, and would probably have been taken for one, to his own intense disgust, in any European crowd.

‘ And how is the mother ? ’ he asked in a

somewhat formal tone, as soon as the first embrace was over. He had been brought up with dutiful ideas.

‘Your mother is exceedingly well,’ answered Greifenstein, whose manner also stiffened perceptibly. There was a moment’s pause.

Perhaps it was in the hope of dissipating that awkward feeling which somehow or other always made itself apparent when the Lady of Greifenstein was mentioned, that her husband pulled out his case and offered Greif a cigar.

‘I have brought you a pipe,’ said the latter, and as the carriage came up to where they were standing he snatched his bag off the back seat. ‘It will make you feel young again,’ he laughed, as he took a paper parcel from the receptacle. ‘It is a “Korps” pipe, colours and tassels and all.’

Greifenstein, one of whose favourite hobbies was the advantage of pipes in general, was as delighted as a boy with the little gift, and instantly produced a huge silver tobacco box out of the depths of his

shooting coat, from which he began to fill the china bowl.

‘Thank you, my boy,’ he said as he drew the air through the unlighted pipe to assure himself that there was no obstruction.

Then he took out an old-fashioned flint and steel, lighted a bit of tinder with a practised hand and laid it upon the tobacco. He made a sign to the coachman, who urged his sturdy Mecklenburg horses up the hill and was soon out of sight. The two men walked slowly forwards and smoked in silence for a few minutes.

‘When is Hilda coming?’ asked Greif at last, when he thought he had allowed a decent interval to elapse before putting the question which chiefly interested him.

‘She will come to-morrow, with her mother,’ replied Greifenstein, not noticing, or pretending not to notice, the faint blush that rose in his son’s face.

‘I suppose we must wait another year,’ remarked Greif with a sigh. ‘It seems absurd that at my age I should not have finished my education.’

‘You will be glad, when you are married, that you have your military service behind you.’

‘I do not know,’ answered the young man absently.

‘You do not know!’ exclaimed his father in surprise. ‘Would you like to go and live with Hilda in a garrison town while you served your year as a volunteer?’

‘I was not thinking of that. I have thought lately that, after all, I had better take active service. Would you object?’

Greifenstein was taken by surprise and would possibly have uttered a loud exclamation if he had not long ago schooled himself to be incapable of any such breach of gravity. But he did not answer the question.

‘Father,’ began Greif again after a pause, ‘is it true that you ever had a brother?’

Greifenstein’s tough face turned slowly grey.

‘A half-brother,’ he answered with an effort. ‘My mother married again.’

Greif glanced sideways at his father and saw that he was oddly affected by the in-

quiry. But the young man had his own reasons for wishing to know the truth.

‘Why have you never told me that I had an uncle?’ he asked.

‘He is no uncle of yours, my boy, nor brother of mine!’ answered Greifenstein bitterly.

‘I fought about him the other day. That is all,’ said Greif.

‘He is not worth fighting for.’

‘Then the story is true?’

‘What story?’ Greifenstein stopped short in his walk and fixed his sharp eyes on his son’s face. ‘What story? What do you know?’

‘A man told me that your brother had been discharged from the army with infamy—*infam cassirt*—and condemned to imprisonment, for betraying some arsenal or armoury into the hands of the rebels in 1848. I told him—well—that he lied. What else could I say? I had never heard of the scoundrel.’

‘You were quite right,’ answered Greifenstein, who was very pale. ‘I never meant

that you should know, any more than your mother. That is the reason why we live in the country all the year. But I thought it would come—I feared that some one would tell you!’

‘I do not think that any one will repeat the experiment,’ observed Greif, turning away and looking down at the torrent, which was visible between the trees. ‘And what has become of this Herr von Riese-neck, if that was his name?’

‘He is alive and well. Rich, for anything I know to the contrary. He escaped from the fortress where he was confined and made his way to South America. I had not seen him for some time before that disgraceful affair. We had quarrelled about other matters, and he had entered the Prussian service.’

‘I wish you had told me about him before.’

‘Why should I? Do you think it is a pleasant subject for conversation? As his name was not mine, thank God, there was a chance that you might never know nor hear of him.’

‘I see why you do not wish me to enter the army.’

‘Yes,’ answered Greifenstein laconically, and he once more walked forward.

For some time neither spoke. Greifenstein’s profound hatred of his dishonoured brother was too deeply stirred to allow of his continuing the conversation, and in a different way the younger man was quite as much affected as his father. When the student with whom he had fought had cast in his teeth the evil deeds of Kuno von Rieseneck, he had unhesitatingly denied the story, thinking it a merely gratuitous insult invented on the spur of the moment. No one present during the altercation had thought fit to confirm the tale, and Greif had wreaked his vengeance upon his enemy in the most approved fashion, in the presence of the assembled ‘Korps.’ But the words had taken effect and he had determined to learn from his father’s lips whether they had any foundation in fact. Being satisfied of the truth of the story, however, his mood changed. No one who has not

studied the character of the German gentleman—the old-fashioned Edelmann—will readily understand how directly he feels himself injured by the disgrace of a relative even very distantly removed. He has often little enough in the world but his name and his pride of caste, but as compared with the former he holds his life as of no value whatsoever, and where the latter is concerned he will suffer much rather than offend the exclusiveness of his class by derogating from the most insignificant of its prejudices. He is not afraid of poverty. No one can maintain the position of a gentleman with more exiguous resources than often fall to his share. Rather than leave the smallest debt of honour unpaid, he will unhesitatingly take his own life. That a man should suffer himself to live after doing such a deed as had broken Kuno von Rieseneck's career seems to him a crime against humanity. He is often called avaricious, because, like Frau von Sigmundskron, he is often very, very poor; but he has never been called a coward, nor a traitor, by any man, or class

of men, who knew him. All gentlemen throughout the world are brothers, it is true, for to be a gentleman is to be brave, honest, courteous, and nothing more. But the gentlemen of different nations are like brothers brought up in different schools. An Englishman who should demand satisfaction by arms, of another Englishman, for a hasty word spoken in jest, would be considered a lunatic in the clubs, and if he carried his warlike intentions into effect with the consent of his adversary, and killed his man, the law would hang him without mercy as a common murderer. On the other hand, a German who should refuse a duel, or not demand one if insulted, would be dismissed from the army and made an outcast from society. And these things do not depend upon civilisation, since modern Germany is probably more civilised than modern England. They depend upon national character.

When Greif heard of his uncle's existence, and, at the same time, of his disgrace, it seemed to him that a cloud had descended upon his own brilliant future. He had long

nursed in secret his desire for a military life, and had often wondered at his father's unwillingness to discuss the matter. He now suddenly understood the true state of the case and realised, by the measure of his disappointment, the magnitude to which his hopes had grown. But there was something more than this in the despondency which seized upon him so quickly and would not be thrown off.

‘Does Hilda know this?’ he asked, at length giving expression to his thoughts.

Greifenstein did not answer at once.

‘I do not think her mother would have told her,’ he said after a time. ‘But her mother knows.’

‘And my mother does not?’

‘No, nor never shall, if I can help it.’

If the two men spoke little on their homeward walk it was not for lack of sympathy between them. On the contrary, if anything could strengthen the strong bond that united them, it was the knowledge that they had a secret in common which they must keep together.

CHAPTER II

To suppose that Hilda, at eighteen years of age, was like the majority of young girls as old as she, would be to imagine that human character is not influenced by its surroundings. She was neither a village Gretchen, such as Faust loved and ruined, nor was she the omniscient damsel of modern society. During the greater part of her existence she had lived without any companions but her mother and the faithful Berbel. But she had grown up in a wild forest country, in a huge dismantled stronghold, of which the windows looked out over the tumbling torrent, and across endless thousands of giant trees, whose dark tops rose like sombre points of shadow out of the deeper shade below. Even the sky was not blue.

Half a kingdom of firs and pines and hemlocks drank the colour from the air and left but a sober neutral tint behind. The sun does not give half the light in the Black Forest that he gives elsewhere. As Hilda had never, within her recollection, seen an open plain, much less a city, her idea of the world beyond those leagues of trees in which she lived was not a very accurate one. She could hardly guess what the streets of a great town were like, or what effect a crowd of civilised people would produce upon her sight. And yet she was far from ignorant. There were books enough left at Sigmundskron for her education, and the baroness had done what was in her power to impart such instruction as she could command. Hilda had probably read as many books as most girls of her age, and had read them more carefully, but she was very far from loving study for its own sake. Her time, too, was occupied in other ways, for she and her mother did most things for themselves, as was to be expected in a household where want reigned supreme over

the hours of every day, from sunrise to sunset.

The necessity for maintaining appearances was small indeed, but such as it was, neither mother nor daughter could avoid it. No one could predict what day the Greifensteins would choose for one of their occasional visits, and in the time of the vacations no one could foresee when Greif might make his appearance, striding over the wooded hills with his gun and his dog to spend a quiet afternoon with Hilda in their favourite sunny corner at the foot of the dismantled tower. When poverty is to be concealed, his shadow must not be caught lurking at the door by chance visitors. Nor was it only out of fear of being surprised by her relations that the quiet baroness insisted that Hilda and even Berbel should always be presentable. Her pride was inseparably united with that rigid self-respect which, in the poor, alone saves pride from being ridiculous. It was indeed marvellous that she should succeed as she did in hiding the extremity of her need from the Greifensteins,

but it must be remembered that she had never been rich, and had learned in early youth many a lesson, many a shift of economy which now stood her in good stead. The Germans have a right to be proud of having elevated thrift to a fine art. From the Emperor to the schoolmaster, from the administration of the greatest military force the world has ever seen to the housekeeping of the meanest peasant, a sober appreciation of the value of money is the prime rule by which everything is regulated. Frau von Sigmundskron had made a plan, had drawn up a tiny budget in exact proportion with the pension which was her only means of subsistence, and thanks to her unfailing health had never departed from it. The expenditure had indeed been so closely regulated from the first, that she had found it necessary to limit herself to what would barely support life, in order not to stint her child's allowance. Being by temperament a very religious woman, she attributed to Providence that success in rearing Hilda for which she

might well have thanked her own iron determination and untiring efforts. If ever a woman deserved the help of Heaven in consideration of having bravely helped herself, the baroness had earned that assistance. So far as the ordinary observer could judge, however, she had obtained nothing from the world save a reputation for avarice. Hilda was too much accustomed to the state of things in which she had grown up, to appreciate her mother's sacrifices, or to feel towards her anything like warm gratitude. She herself did all she could, and that was not little, in the struggle for existence. It is even possible that she was more grateful to Berbel, than to the baroness herself. For Berbel voluntarily shared privations, to which the two ladies were obliged to submit. Berbel was faithful, devoted, uncomplaining, cheerful; and she was all this, not for the sake of a servant's pay, since her wages were infinitesimally small, but out of pure affection for her mistress.

Berbel had been the wife of Lieutenant von Sigmundskron's servant, who had fallen

beside his master, rifle in hand, his face to the enemy. Mistress and maid were left alike widows on the same day, alike young and portionless, the only difference being that Frau von Sigmundskron had Hilda, while poor Berbel was childless. Then Berbel refused to go away, once and for ever, and the officer's widow accepted the lifelong devotion offered her, and the three cast in their lot together, to keep themselves alive as best they could beneath the only roof that was left to them.

Frau von Sigmundskron had been very much surprised when, on a sunny June morning, three years before the time of which I write, Greifenstein had appeared alone, arrayed in the most correct manner, instead of being clad in the shooting coat he usually wore. She had been still more astonished when he formally proposed to her an engagement by which Greif should marry Hilda so soon as he had finished his studies at the University. He told her frankly why he desired the alliance. She knew of Rieseneck's disgrace, and she would

understand that the story was an injury to Greif. On the other hand he, Greif's father, had never done anything to be ashamed of, and the lad himself was growing up to be a very fine fellow and would be rich—Greifenstein did not state the amount of his fortune. He apprehended that his cousin would consider Greif a good match from a worldly point of view. Furthermore, though barely twenty, the young man was deeply attached to Hilda, who was just fifteen. The attachment was evidently likely to turn into love when both should be three or four years older. If Frau von Sigmundskron would consent, a preliminary, verbal agreement might be made, subject to the will of the two children when the right time should come, it being essentially necessary, as Greifenstein remarked in his stiffest manner, that two young people should love each other sincerely if they meant to marry.

The baroness opened her clear blue eyes very wide, as though she had seen a coach and four laden with sacks of gold driving

through the old gates of the castle. But she was far too well bred to burst into tears, or to exhibit any embarrassment, or even an improper amount of satisfaction. She replied that she was much obliged; that she was poor, and that Hilda would inherit nothing whatsoever except Sigmundskron, a fact which her cousin must please to understand from the first; that, if the absence of any dower were not an obstacle, it was not for her to create difficulties; and, finally, that she believed Hilda to be quite as much attached to Greif, as Greif to her. Thereupon Berbel was sent to fetch a bottle of wine—there had been half a dozen bottles in the cellar thirteen years ago, and this was the first that had been opened—and Greifenstein refreshed himself therewith and departed, as stiffly, courteously and kindly as he had come.

Greif had come over as often as he pleased during his vacations, and had written whenever he liked during his terms. Never having seen any one at home or abroad whom he considered comparable

with Hilda, he had grown up to love her as naturally as he loved the pine-scented air of his home, the warm soft sun, or the still beauty of the forest. Hilda was an essential part of his life and being, without which he could imagine no future. Year by year it grew harder to say good-bye, and the happiness of meeting grew deeper and more real. There was a pride in the knowledge that she was for him only, which played upon the unconscious selfishness of his young nature and gave him the most profound and exquisite delight. At three and twenty he was old enough to understand the world about him, he had accomplished his year of obligatory service in the army, and had come into contact with all sorts of men, things and ideas. He was himself a man, and had outgrown most boyish fallacies and illusions, but he had not outgrown Hilda. She was there, in the heart of the forest, in the towers of Sigmundskron, away from the world he had seen, and maidenly ignorant of all it contained, waiting for him, the incarnation of all that

was lovely, and young, and fair, and spotless. He pitied his fellow-students, who loved vulgarly whatever came into their way. He could not imagine what life would be without Hilda. It was a strange sort of love, too, for there had been no wooing; they had grown up for each other as naturally as the song-bird for its mate. There had been no hindrances, no jealousies, no alternate hopes and fears, none of those vicissitudes to which love is heir. Nothing but the calamity of death could interfere with the fulfilment of their happiness, and perhaps no two beings ever loved each other from whom death seemed so far.

Hilda was happy, too, in her own way, for what she knew of the outer world was what she saw through Greif's eyes. To him the greatest of all blessings would be to come back to the forest and never to leave it again, and Hilda argued that the world could not be worth seeing, if the woods were so vastly preferable as he seemed to think. She felt herself to be what she was in his imagination, a part of

the nature in which she had grown up, as much as the oldest and tallest fir tree on the hillside. People who spend all their lives in unfrequented regions, feel a sense of property in the air, the earth and the water, which city-bred folks cannot readily understand. They have such an intimate, unconscious knowledge of the seasons, the weather, the growth of plants and the habits of animals, that it seems to them as though their own hearts beat in every corner of the world around them, and as though all the changes they see from day to day were only manifestations of their own vitality. They may not see, or know that they see, beauties which amaze the wanderer who visits their wilderness, but they feel them as he never can, and feed on them as he cannot feed. Their senses, not dulled by daily close contact with thousands of indifferent and similar objects, nor by the ceaseless chatter of their fellow-beings, see sights and hear sounds altogether beyond the perceptions of gregarious man. The infinite variety of nature, as compared

with the pitiful monotony of the works of humanity, produces in their minds an activity of an especial kind. They do not know what mental weariness means, nor the desire for nervous excitement. The succession of morning and evening does not bore them, for it is a part of themselves, like hunger and the satisfaction of appetite, thirst and the refreshing draught from the spring. They are good, though their virtues be negative, and they are happy, for they have never heard of unhappiness. Their existence is the very opposite of ours, full where ours is empty, empty where ours is crowded to overflowing. They are never alone, for the world is their companion, they are never hurried, for they move with time itself, whereas our existence is but one long effort to outrun the revolution of the hours. They do not dream of fame, for they feel the eternity of perpetually renewed life in all that surrounds them; they have never heard of competition, for their only rival is God Himself.

Hilda's earliest recollections did not go

back beyond the time when she had been brought to the Black Forest, and the singular simplicity of her life made the past years seem strangely short. Children whose first remembrances are full of new impressions, grow old quickly, while those to whose perceptions little is offered grow up more slowly, and more naturally. Other conditions being the same, these latter will be calmer, healthier and more reasonable. The best horse is not the one which is made to do the most work as a colt, though performing dogs must learn their tricks as puppies if they are to learn them at all. Much in life depends upon the truth of our first impressions, and as this, in its turn, depends directly upon our ability to judge what we see and hear, it is clear that children may be injured permanently if too many things be brought within the sphere of their observation before they have learned the uses of hearing and sight.

The grand solitudes of the forest, the imposing calm of nature when at rest, the indescribable magnificence of the winter

storms, had furnished Hilda with her first deep impressions. That death, of which her mother sometimes spoke, was the disappearance of all that lived beneath the soft, silent snow. That mysterious resurrection of the dead was nature's irresistible glad leap to meet the sun, as the noonday shadows shortened day by day; that happy life to come was the far-off summer, when the wind would sigh and whisper again among the branches he had so rudely handled in his wrath, when all the air would smell of the warm pines, when the mayflower would follow the hawthorn, and the purple gentian take the mayflower's place, when the wild pea-blossom would elbow the forest violet, and the clover and wild thyme and mint would spring up thick and crisp and sweet for the dainty roebuck and his doe. Hilda used to think that the souls of the blessed would at last take their bodies again, just as the wildflowers in the wood sprang up with their own shape and beauty, each according to the little seed that had lain dead and forgotten since autumn had sighed

its dirge above their myriad tiny graves, burying the summer as sadly as men bury those they dearly love.

And yet Hilda never put any of those thoughts into words, though in her books she loved best those words that expressed her half-formulated feelings. Had she been removed to the noise and the whirl of city life, she would very probably have known how to define what she had lost, she might even have made others feel what she herself had so keenly felt. But in the silent towers of her home, or amidst that noiseless, ever-growing life that belongs to undisturbed nature, all she could have wished to express was expressed for her, in a grander language than that of man. She had no need of spending long hours in reverie and contemplation, as people do who are not used to their surroundings, or who compare their present with their past. Constant occupation had become a part of her being, and unceasing small activity in household matters the condition of her life. Heaven knows, there was enough to do between making and

mending everything she wore, keeping in order even the small part of the gigantic building which she and her mother inhabited, cultivating as best she could the plot of ground in the castle yard which was all the land left to her, the last of her name, and, in the midst of all this manual labour, in maintaining that prescribed amount of appearance, from which she had never been allowed to deviate since she had been a little child. A spotless perfection of neatness was indeed the only luxury left within reach of the two ladies, and for that one available satisfaction there was no trouble they would not cheerfully undergo. But these manifold household labours did not vulgarise Hilda's character. If she enjoyed the luxury of Greifenstein during her half-yearly visits, it was not because she disliked or despised her own home life. She was too thoroughly conscious of the inevitable to groan over her lot, she was too strong in mind and body to desire luxurious idleness, and she never imagined that a woman could find occupation except in household duties. Her whole

existence had made her so simple that she could never have comprehended that complicated state of mind which is so delightful to society.

Something of nature's own freshness, too, had been infused into the young girl's veins, refreshing and renewing the life in that old blood of which she was the last descendant. Blue eyes are rarely very bright. Hilda's seemed to have a special vitality of their own, which gave the impression that they must shine in the dark as some crystals do for a few seconds when they have been long exposed to the sun. They were of that rare type which appear to sparkle even when not seen directly, not merely reflecting the light as a placid pool reflects it, but making it dance and change as sunshine does in falling water. Hilda's hair was yellow, and yellow hair is often lustreless as the pine dust in the woods; but hers glowed, as it were by its own colour, without reflection, out of the very abundance of vitality. Her features were delicate and aquiline, but were saved from any look of deficient strength

by that perfection of evenly-distributed colour which comes only from matchless health and untainted blood, combined with a rare strength in the action of the heart. Hilda possessed one of those highly-favoured organisations which nature occasionally produces as normal types of what humanity should be. Such people bring with them a radiance that nothing can extinguish, not even extreme old age. Their beauty may not be of the highest type, but their vitality is irresistibly attractive, and spreads to their surroundings, undiminished by any effort they make.

When Hilda was told that if she and Greif loved each other they should marry, she was far less surprised than her mother had been when old Greifenstein had made his proposal. It seemed strange to the baroness that her daughter should not even blush a little on learning the news. But Hilda saw no reason for blushing and did not feel in the least disconcerted. To her it all seemed perfectly natural. She had always loved Greif, ever since she could

remember anything. Why should he not love her? And if they loved each other, they would of course be married in due time. It was but the fulfilment of her life, after all. There was surely nothing in the idea to cause her any emotion. Did not Heaven dispose everything in the best possible way, and was not this the best possible thing that could happen? Did the hawk mate with the wren, or the wild boar with the doe? But the baroness did not understand. She asked Hilda if she should be very unhappy if Greif died, or if he married some one else.

‘God will not be so unkind,’ answered the young girl simply.

Frau von Sigmundskron was silent. It was clear that Hilda, in her innocence, had never expected anything else, but her mother trembled to think of what might happen if that simple faith were rudely disappointed. It was characteristic of the devoted mother that she thought of her child’s heart, and not of the worldly difference to Hilda between single life at Sig-

mundskron and wedded life at Greifenstein, between starvation and plenty, extreme poverty and the state of enjoying all that money could give. It was long before she could comprehend what had passed in Hilda's mind, or the process of reasoning by which the young girl had reached such a calm certainty of anticipation. When she at last saw that it was an extremely simple matter, she realised how completely her daughter had been shut off from the world since her birth. At first she had doubted the reality of the girl's quiet manner in the circumstances, but she soon discovered that Hilda behaved during Greif's visits exactly as she had always done, meeting him gladly, parting from him regretfully, speaking with him as though there were no difference in their relations in the present, nor were to be in the future, excepting that Greif would always be present, instead of only coming from time to time. She knew that Greif himself was far from looking at the matter with such supreme calm. She saw the colour come

and go in his fair face in a way that showed a constant emotion, and she feared lest such a very susceptible young man as he appeared to be should be entrapped, when away from home, by the designing mother, of whom every other mother sees the type in the background of her thoughts.

But Greif did not fall a victim to any such schemes. If Hilda had at all resembled most girls of her age, he could have compared her with them, and the comparison would not have been to her advantage. She could not have possessed their cheap accomplishments, their knowledge of waltzing, or their intimate acquaintance with their neighbour's affairs. She could not have put on their sentimentality with men, nor their cynicism with each other. She could not imitate their glances and she did not imitate their dress. She was a creature apart from them all. Deeply imbued as he was with all the prejudices of an exclusive caste, Greif could not have looked upon Hilda as he did, if she had been a peasant's child, even though she had been herself in

all other respects. There was that in her position which appealed to the romanticism of his nature. The noble but unfortunate maiden, the last of an ancient race, dwelling in dignified retirement in her half-ruined ancestral home, was vastly more interesting than any equally well-born girl could have been, who chanced to be rich enough to be marched into society as a matrimonial investment for young men of her station. But it was precisely because Hilda possessed that one point in common with all such eligible young ladies that Greif regarded her with a romantic devotion he could never have felt for a village Gretchen. His pride in her nobility was indeed far less than his love for herself, but it made for that love a rampart against love's deadliest enemy, which is ridicule. He certainly did not tell himself so. He would have thought it an insult to Hilda to worship her for anything but her own self; but he was none the less aware that the pedestal upon which his idol stood was strong enough to withstand any assault. This being certain, it was the very

impossibility of any further comparison that attracted him most. She was unlike any one whom he met, or was ever likely to meet, and his imagination invested her with many exceptional attributes, most of which she undoubtedly possessed in one degree or another.

Each time he returned and left the noisy train and the smart modern railway station behind him, to plunge into the silent forest, he felt more strongly that his real sympathies all lay between Greifenstein and Sigmundskron, and that his visits to the world were only disturbing dreams. They must be renewed from time to time, at ever-increasing intervals, but the real peace of his life awaited him in his home. He, too, like Hilda, was a child of the woods, and felt that the trees, the foaming streams and the changeless crags were all parts of himself, to lose which would be like forfeiting a limb of his body or a sense of his intelligence. The baroness need not have been afraid lest he should wander about the world to forget Sigmundskron or Hilda. Nature

had made him constant, and circumstances had made him happy in his own place.

And so for years the lives of all these persons had run on, until the time was approaching when Greif and Hilda were to be married, and great changes were to be made at Sigmundskron. Greif had come home for the last time but one, and his next return would be final. During months and years the baroness and her daughter had been slowly preparing for the great event. The most unheard-of economies had been imagined and carried out in the attempt to give Hilda a little outfit for her wedding, just enough to hide the desperate poverty in which they had lived. Many a long winter's evening had the two ladies spun the fine flax by the smouldering fire ; many a long day had Hilda and Berbel spent at the primitive loom in the sunny room of the south tower ; through many a summer's noon had the long breadths of fine linen lain bleaching on the clean grey stone of the ramparts, watered by the faithful servant's careful hand. Endless had been the thought

expended before cutting into each piece of the precious material; endless the labour lavished upon the fine embroideries by Hilda herself, upon the minute stitching by her brave-hearted mother. But the work had progressed well, and the finished garments that lay amidst bundles of sweet-smelling dried herbs in the great old press would have done credit to the spinning and weaving and handiwork of skilled craftsmen. It was fortunate that there had been time for it all, else Hilda would have made but a poor figure on the great day.

As for Berbel she believed that the forest itself had helped them, when she saw all that had been accomplished and remembered how she had bought the flax pound by pound at the market. Though a great share in the joint success was due to her own patient industry, the result seemed so fine as compared with the humble beginnings that she was much inclined to thank the *Heinzelmännchen* and their 'brownies' for the most part of it all. The baroness thanked Providence, and Hilda thought it

was all due to her love for Greif. Perhaps they were all three right, and possibly each shared in some measure the views of the other two. At least so far as the gnomes are concerned, most people who have lived long in forests and solitary places have discovered that their work, if they like it, is performed with a rapidity and skill which is marvellous in their own eyes, and if you do not call the little gentleman who comes at night and helps you by the name of Rübezahl, you may call him the Spirit of Peace. But as long as you receive him kindly and give him his due it matters very little how you christen him, for he is an affectionate spirit and loves those who love him for himself, and does their work for them, or makes them think he does, which, in fact, is just the same.

Unfortunately there are other spirits as busy as he in the world, and he has a way of taking himself off at the slightest alarm, which is often very distressing to those who love him; and some of those other spirits had chosen for their abode the Castle of

Greifenstein and for their companions the persons who dwelt there. The unforeseen plays a very great part in our lives ; for if it did not, we should most of us know exactly what to do at the right moment, and should consequently approach perfection at an unnatural rate. While Greif and his father were slowly ascending the hill towards their home, while Frau von Greifenstein was looking at herself in her mirror and wondering whether she had not thrown away her youth after all, while Berbel was weaving and Hilda embroidering and the old baroness stitching steadily along the folded linen—while all these people were thus quietly and peaceably engaged, an event was brewing which was destined to produce some very remarkable results. And lest the justification of ordinary possibility should be required by the sceptical hereafter, I will at once state that the greater part of what follows is a matter of history, well known to many living persons ; and that in writing it down I wish it to be understood that I am submitting to the

judgment of humanity a strange case which actually occurred within this century, rather than constructing from my own imagination a mere romance for the delectation of such as will take the trouble to read it.

CHAPTER III

‘OH! Is it not too delightful to see my dear, dear cousins!’ screamed Frau von Greifenstein, throwing herself into the arms of the pale and quiet baroness. ‘And dear Hilda, too! Ach, ist es nicht herzig! Is it not too sweet!’

She was wonderfully arrayed in an exceedingly youthful costume, short enough to display her thin, elderly ankles, and adorned with many flying ribbands and furbelows. An impossibly high garden hat crowned her faded head, allowing certain rather unattached-looking ringlets of colourless blonde hair to stray about her cheeks. She made one think of a butterfly, no longer young, but attempting to keep up the illusions of spring. Hilda and her

mother smiled and returned the salutation in their quiet way.

‘And how have you been at Sigmundskron?’ continued the sprightly lady. ‘Do you know? It would be my dream to live at Sigmundskron! So romantic, so solitary, so deliciously poetic! It is no wonder that you look like Cinderella and the fairy god-mother! I am sure they both lived at Sigmundskron—and Greif will be the Prince Charmant with his Puss in Boots—quite a Lohengrin in fact—dear me! I am afraid I am mixing them up—those old German myths are so confusing, and I am quite beside myself with the joy of seeing you!’

Greifenstein stood looking on, not a muscle of his face betraying the slightest emotion at his wife’s incoherent speech. But Greif had turned away and appeared to be examining one of the guns that stood in a rack against the wall. The meeting had taken place in the great hall, and he was glad that there was something to look at, for he did not know whether he was most

amused by his mother's chatter, or ashamed of the ridiculous figure she made. The impression was certainly a painful one, and he had not attained to his father's grim indifference, for he was not obliged to assist daily at such scenes. He could not help comparing Hilda's mother with his own, and he inwardly determined that when he was married he would take up his abode at Sigmundskron during the greater part of the year.

Hilda looked at her hostess and wondered whether all women of the world were like Frau von Greifenstein. The situation did not last long, however, and half an hour later she found herself sitting beside Greif on a block of stone by the ruined Hunger-Thurm.

'At last!' exclaimed Greif, with a sigh of satisfaction. 'Is there anything so tiresome as the sight of affectionate greetings?'

'Greif——' Hilda paused, as though reconsidering the question she was about to ask.

'Yes—what is it, sweetheart?'

‘When we are married, I must love your mother, must I not?’

‘Oh yes—no doubt,’ answered the young man with a puzzled expression. ‘At least, I suppose you must try.’

‘But I mean, if I do not love her as much as my own mother, will it be very wrong?’

‘No, not so much, of course.’

‘Do you love her, Greif?’

‘Oh yes,’ replied Greif cheerfully. ‘Not as I love you——’

‘Or your father?’

‘That is different, a man feels more sympathy for his father, because he is a man.’

‘But I am not a man——’

‘No, and you are not my mother either. That is again different, you see.’

‘Greif—you do not love your mother at all!’ exclaimed Hilda, turning her bright eyes to his. But he looked away and his face grew grave.

‘Please do not say that to me, dear,’ he answered quietly. ‘Let us talk of other things.’

‘Does it pain you? I am sorry. I asked you because—well, I wanted to know if it was exactly my duty—because—you see, I do not think I ever could, quite, as I ought to. You are not angry?’

‘No, darling. I quite understand. It will be enough if you behave to her as you do now. Besides, I was going to propose something, if your mother will agree to it. When we are married, we might live at Sigmundskron.’

‘Oh! Greif, are you in earnest?’

‘Yes. Why not?’

‘You do not know what a place it is!’ exclaimed Hilda with an uneasy laugh. She had visions of her husband discovering the utter desolation of the old castle, but at the same time she felt a sudden wild desire to see it all restored and furnished and kept up as it should be.

‘Yes, I know. But there are many reasons why I should like it. Of course it has gone to ruin, more or less, and there would be something to be done.’

‘Something!’ cried Hilda. ‘Everything!’

The great rooms are perfectly desolate, no furniture, hardly any glass in the windows. We are so poor, Greif!’

‘But I can put panes into the frames and get some furniture. We need not have so much at first.’

‘But you will have to get everything, everything. You are used to so much here.’

‘I should not need much if I had you,’ answered Greif looking at her, as the colour rose in his own face.

‘I do not know. Perhaps not.’

‘I should be happy with you in a woodman’s hut,’ said Greif earnestly.

‘Perhaps,’ replied Hilda a little doubtfully.

‘There is no “perhaps.” I am quite sure of it.’

‘How can you be sure?’ asked the young girl turning suddenly and laying her hands upon his arm. ‘Did not your father say the same—no, forgive me! I will not speak of that. O Greif! What is love—really—the meaning of it, the true spirit of it? Why does it sometimes last and sometimes—not? Are all men so different

one from another, and women too? Is it not like religion, that when you once believe you always believe? I have thought about it so much, and I cannot understand it. And yet I know I love you. Why can I not understand what I feel? Is it very foolish of me? Am I less clever than other girls?’

‘No, indeed!’ Greif drew her to him, and kissed her cheek. Her colour never changed. With innocent simplicity she turned her face and kissed him in return.

‘Then why is it?’ she asked. ‘And none of my books tell me what it means, though I have read them all. Can you not tell me, you who know so much? What is the use of all your studies and your universities, if you cannot tell me what it is I feel, what love is?’

‘Does love need explanation? What does the meaning matter, when one has it?’

‘Ah, you may say that of anything. Would the air be sweeter, if I knew what it was? Would the storm be louder, or grander, or more angry, if I knew what made it?’

And besides, I do know, for I have learned about storms in my books. But it is not the same thing. Love is not part of nature, I am sure. It is a part of the soul. But then, why should it sometimes change? The soul does not change, for it is eternal.'

'But true love does not change either——'

'And yet people seem to think it is true, until it changes,' argued Hilda. 'There must be something by which one can tell whether it is true or not.'

'One must not be too logical with love, any more than with religion.'

'Religion? Why, that is the most logical thing we know anything about!'

'And yet people have differed very much in their opinions of it,' said Greif with a smile.

'Is it not logical that good people should go to heaven and bad people to hell?' inquired Hilda calmly. 'Religion would be illogical if it taught that sinners should all be saved and saints burnt in everlasting fire. How can you say it is not logical?'

'It certainly cannot be said if one takes

your view,' Greif answered, laughing. 'But then, if you look at love in the same way, you get the same result. People who love each other are happy and people who quarrel are not.'

'Yes; but then, love does not only consist in not quarrelling.'

'Nor religion in not being a sinner—but I am not sure——' Greif interrupted himself. 'Perhaps that is just what religion means.'

'Then why cannot love mean something quite as simple?'

'It seems simple enough to me. So long as we are everything to each other we shall understand it quite enough.'

'Just so long——'

'And that means for ever.'

'How do you know, unless you have some knowledge by which you can tell whether your love is true or not?'

'Why not yours, sweetheart?'

'Oh! I know myself well enough. I shall never change. But you — you might——'

‘Do you not believe me?’

‘Yes, I suppose so. But it always comes to that in the end, whenever we talk about it, and I am never any nearer to knowing what love is, after all!’

The young girl rested her chin upon her hand and looked wistfully through the trees, as though she wished and half expected that some wise fairy would come flitting through the shadow and the patches of sunshine to tell her the meaning of her love, of her life, of all she felt, of all she did not feel. She read in books that maidens blushed when the man they loved spoke to them, that their hearts beat fast and that their hands grew cold—simple expressions out of simple and almost childish tales. But none of these things happened to her. Why should they? Had she not expected to meet Greif that day? Why should she feel surprise, or fear, or whatever it was, that made the hearts of maidens in fiction behave so oddly? He was very handsome, as he sat there glancing sideways at her, and she could see him distinctly, though she seemed

to be looking at the trees. But that was no reason why she should turn red and pale, and tremble as though she had done something very wrong. It was all quite right, and quite sanctioned. She had nothing to say to Greif, nothing to think about him, that her mother might not have heard or known.

‘I am no nearer to knowing,’ she repeated after a long interval of silence.

‘And I am no nearer to the wish to know,’ answered Greif, clasping his brown hands over his knee and gazing at her from under the brim of his straw hat. ‘You are a strange girl, Hilda,’ he added presently, and something in his face showed that her singularity pleased him and satisfied his pride.

‘Am I? Then why do you like me? Or do you like me because I am strange?’

‘I wish I were a poet,’ observed Greif instead of answering her. ‘I would write such things about you as have never been written about any woman. However, I suppose you would never read my verses.’

‘Oh yes!’ laughed Hilda. ‘Especially if mamma told me that they belonged to the “best German epoch.” But I should not like them——’

‘You do not like poetry in general, I believe.’

‘It always seems to me a very unnatural way of expressing oneself,’ answered Hilda thoughtfully. ‘Why should a man go out of his way to put what he wants to say into a certain shape? What necessity is there for putting in a word more than is needed, or for pinching oneself so as to cut one out that would be useful for the sense, just because by doing that you can make everything fit a certain mould and sound mechanical—ta ra tatatata ta tum tum! “Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten,” and all the rest of it. There is something wrong. That poem is very sad and romantic in idea, and yet you always sing it when you are particularly happy.’

‘Most people do,’ said Greif, smiling at the truth of the observation.

‘Then what is there in poetry? Does

“I love you” sound sweeter if it is followed by a mechanical “ta ra ta ra ta tum” of words quite unnecessary to the thought, which you only hear because they jingle after you, as your spurs do, when you have been riding and are on foot, at every step you take?’

‘Schlagend!’ laughed Greif. ‘An annihilating argument! I will never think of writing verses any more, I promise you.’

‘No. Don’t,’ answered Hilda emphatically. ‘Unless you feel that you cannot love me in plain language—in prose,’ she added, with a glance of her sparkling eyes.

‘Verse would be better than nothing, then?’

‘Than nothing—anything would be better than that.’

Greif fell to wondering whether her serious tone meant all that he understood by it, and he asked himself whether her calm, passionless affection were really what he in his heart called love. She felt no emotion, like his own. She could pronounce the words ‘I love’ again and again without

a tremor of the voice or a change in the even shading of her radiant colour. It was possible that she only thought of him as a brother, as a part of the world she lived in, as something dearer than her mother because nearer to her own age. It was possible that if she had been in the world she might have seen some man whose mere presence could make her feel all she had never felt. It was conceivable that she should have fallen into this sisterly sort of affection in the absence of any person who might have awakened her real sensibilities. Greif's masculine nature was not satisfied, for it craved a more active response, as a lad watches for the widening ripples when he has dropped a pebble into a placid pool. An irresistible desire to know the truth overcame Greif.

‘Are you quite sure of yourself, sweetheart?’ he asked softly.

‘Of what?’

‘That you really love me. Do you know——’

Before he could finish the question Hilda

was looking into his face, with an expression he had never seen before. He stopped short, surprised at the effect of his own words. Hilda was very angry, perhaps for the first time in her whole life. The brightness of her eyes almost startled him, and there was a slight contraction of the brows that gave her features a look of amazing power. Greif even fancied that, for once, her cheek was a shade paler than usual.

‘You do not know what you say,’ she answered very slowly.

‘Darling—you have misunderstood me!’ exclaimed Greif in distress. ‘I did not mean to say——’

‘You asked me if I were sure that I really loved you,’ said Hilda very gravely. ‘You must be mad, but those were your words.’

‘Hear me, sweetheart! I only asked because—you see, you are so different from other women! How can I explain!’

‘So you have had experience of others!’ She spoke coldly and her voice had an incisive ring in it that wounded him as a

knife. He was too inexperienced to know what to do, and he instinctively assumed that look of injured superiority which it is the peculiar privilege of women to wear in such cases, and which, in a man, exasperates them beyond measure.

‘My dear,’ said Greif, ‘you have quite misunderstood me. I will explain the situation.’

‘It is necessary,’ answered Hilda, looking at the trees.

‘In the first place, you must remember what we were saying, or rather what you were saying a little while ago. You wanted an explanation of the nature of love. Now that made me think that you had never felt what I feel——’

‘I have not had your experience,’ observed Hilda.

‘But I have not had any experience either!’ exclaimed Greif, suddenly breaking down in his dissertation.

‘Then how do you know that I am so different from other women?’ was the inexorable retort.

‘I have seen other women, and talked with them——’

‘About love?’

‘No—about the weather,’ answered Greif, annoyed at her persistence.

‘And were their views about the weather so very different from mine?’ inquired the young girl, pushing him to the end of the situation.

‘Perhaps.’

‘You do not seem sure. I wish you would explain yourself, as you promised to do!’

‘Then you must not interrupt me at every word.’

‘Was I interrupting? I thought my questions might help you. Go on.’

‘I only mean to say that I never heard of a woman who wanted an explanation of her feelings when she was in love. And then I wondered whether your love was like mine, and as I am very sure, I supposed that if you felt differently you could not be so sure as I. That is all. Why are you so angry?’

‘You know very well why I am angry. That is only an excuse.’

‘If you are going to argue in that way ——’ Greif shrugged his shoulders and said nothing more. Hilda seemed to be collecting her thoughts.

‘You evidently doubt me,’ she said at last, speaking quietly. ‘It is the first time. You have tried to defend your question, and you have not succeeded. All that you can tell me is that I am different from other women with whom you have talked. I know that as well as you do, though I have never seen them. It is quite possible that the difference may come from my education, or want of education. In that case, if you are going to be ashamed of me, when I am your wife, because I know less than the girls you have seen in towns and such places—why then, go away and marry one of them. She will feel as you expect her to feel, and you will be satisfied.’

‘Hilda!’

‘I mean what I say. But there may be something else. The difference may be

there because I have not learned the same outward manners as the city people, because I do not laugh when they would laugh, cry when they would cry, act as they would act. I do not know half the things they like, or do, or say, but from what I have read I fancy that they are not at all simple, nor straightforward in their likings and dislikes, nor in their speech either. I do not even know whether I look like them, nor whether if I went to their places they would not take me for some strange wild animal. I make my own clothes. I have heard that they spend for one bit of dress as much as my mother and I spend in a whole year upon everything. I suppose they do, for your mother must wear what people wear in towns, and her things must cost a great deal. I think I should feel uncomfortable in them, but if we are married I will wear what you please——’

‘How can you say such things——’

‘I am only going over the points in which I am different from other women. That is one of them. Then I believe they learn all

sorts of tricks—they can play on the piano—I have never seen one, for it is the only thing you have not got at Greifenstein,—they draw and paint, they talk in more than one language, whereas I only know what little French my mother could teach me, they sing from written music—for that matter, I can sing without, which I suppose ought to be harder. But they can do all those little things, which I suppose amuse you, and of which I cannot do one. Perhaps those accomplishments, or tricks, change them so that they feel more than I do. But I do not believe it. If I had the chance of learning them I would do it, to please you. It would not make me love you any more. I believe that we, who think of few people because we know few, think of them more and more lovingly. But if I took trouble to please you, it would show you how much I love you. Perhaps—perhaps that is what you really want, that I should say more, act more, make a greater show. Is that it, after all?’

Her mood had changed while she was

speaking, perhaps by the enumeration of her points of inferiority. She turned her bright eyes towards Greif with a look of curiosity, as though wondering whether she had hit the mark, as indeed she had, by a pure accident.

‘It cannot be that—I cannot be such a fool!’ Greif exclaimed with all the resentment of a man who has been found out in his selfishness.

‘I should not think any the worse of you,’ said Hilda. ‘It is I who have been foolish not to guess it before. How should you understand that I love you, merely because I say good morning and kiss you, and good evening and kiss you, and talk about the weather and your mother’s ribbands! There must be something more. And yet I feel that if you married some one else, I should be very unhappy and should perhaps die. Why not? There would not be anything to live for. Why can I not find some way of letting you know how I love you? There must be ways of showing it—but I have thought of everything I can do for you, and

it is so little, for you have everything. Only—Greif, you must not doubt that I love you because I have no way of showing it—or if you do——’

‘Forgive me, Hilda—I never doubted——’

‘Oh, but you did, you did,’ answered Hilda with great emphasis, and in a tone which showed how deeply the words had wounded her. ‘It is natural, I suppose, and then, is it not better that I should know it? It is of no use to hide such things. I should have felt it, if you had not told me.’

It was not in Hilda’s nature to shed tears easily, for she had been exposed to so few emotions in her life that she had never acquired the habit of weeping. But there was something in her expression that moved Greif more than a fit of sobbing could have done. There was an evident strength in her resentment, even though it showed itself in temperate words, which indicated a greater solidity of character than the young man had given her credit for. He had not realised that a love developed by natural and slow degrees, without a shadow

of opposition, could be deeper and more enduring than the spasmodic passion that springs up amidst the unstable surroundings of the world, ill nourished by an uncertain alternation of hope and fear, and prone to consume itself in the heat of its own expression. The one is about as different from the other as the slowly moving glacier of the Alps is from the gaudily decorated and artificially frozen concoction of the ice-cream vendor.

‘I am very sorry I said it,’ returned Greif penitently. He took her passive hand in his, hoping to make the peace as quickly as he had broken it, but she did not return the pressure of his fingers.

‘So am I,’ she answered thoughtfully. ‘I was angry at first. I do not think I am angry any more, but I cannot forget it, because, in some way or other, it must be my fault. Forgive you? There is nothing to forgive, dear. Why should one not speak out what is in one’s heart? It would be a sort of lie, if one did not. I would tell you at once, if I thought you did not love me——’

Greif smiled.

‘Ah Hilda! Since we have been sitting here, you have told me you thought I might change—do you not remember? Was what I said so much worse than that?’

‘Of course it was,’ she answered. ‘Ever so much worse.’

Thereupon Greif meditated for some moments upon the nature of woman, and to tell the truth he was not so far advanced as to have no need for such study. Finding no suitable answer to what she had said, he could think of nothing better than to press her hand gently and stroke her long straight fingers. Presently, the pressure was returned and Greif congratulated himself, with some reason, upon having discovered the only plausible argument within his reach. But his wisdom did not go so far as to keep him silent.

‘I think I understand you better than I did,’ he said.

Hilda did not withdraw her hand, but it became again quite passive in his, and she once more seemed deeply interested in the trees.

‘Do you?’ she asked indifferently after a pause.

‘Perhaps I should rather say myself,’ said Greif, finding that he had made a mistake. ‘And that is quite another matter.’

‘Yes—it is. Which do you mean?’ Hilda laughed a little.

‘Whichever you like best,’ answered Greif, who was at his wit’s end.

‘Whichever I like?’ she looked at him long, and then her face softened wonderfully. ‘Let it be neither, dear,’ she said. ‘Let us not try to understand, but only love, love, love for ever! Love is so much better than any discussion about it, so much sweeter than anything that you or I can say in its favour, so much more real and lasting than the meanings of words. If you could describe it, it would be like anything else, and if you tried, and could not, you might think there was no such thing at all, and that would not be true.’

‘You talk better than I do, sweetheart. Where did you learn to say such things?’

‘I never learned, but I think sometimes that the heart talks better than the head, because the heart feels what it is talking about, and the head only thinks it feels. Do you see? You have learnt so much, that your head will not let your heart speak in plain German.’

Greif smiled at the phrase, which indeed contained a vast amount of truth.

‘If you could make the professors of philosophy understand that,’ he answered, ‘you would simplify my education very much.’

‘I do not know what philosophy is, dear, but if there were a professor here, I would try and persuade him, if it would do you any good. I know I am right.’

‘Of course you are. You always will be—you represent what Plato hankered after and never found.’

‘What was that?’

‘Oh! nothing—only perfection,’ laughed Greif.

‘Nonsense! If I am perfection, what must you be? Plato himself? I do not

know much about him, but I have read that he was a good man. Perhaps you are like him.'

'The resemblance cannot be very striking, for no one has noticed it, not even the professors themselves, who ought to know.'

'Must you go back to Schwarzburg?' Hilda asked, suddenly growing serious.

'Yes, but it is the last time. It will not seem long—there is so much to be done.'

'No. It will not seem long,' answered Hilda, thinking of all that she and her mother must do before the wedding. 'But the long times are not always the sad times,' she added sorrowfully.

'I shall be here for Christmas,' said Greif. 'And in the new year we will be married, and then—we must think of what we will do.'

'We will live at Sigmundskron, as you said, shall we not?'

'Yes. But before that we will go away for a while.'

'Away? Why?'

'People always do when they are married.'

We will go to Italy, if you like, or anywhere else.'

'But why must we go away?' asked Hilda anxiously. 'Do you think we shall not be as happy here as anywhere else? Oh, I could not live out of the dear forest!'

'But, sweetheart, you have never seen a town, nor anything of the world. Would you not care to know what it is all like beyond the trees?'

'By and by—yes, I would like to see it all. But I would like poor old Sigmundskron to see how happy we shall be. I think the grey towers will almost seem to laugh on that day, and the big firs—they saw my great grandfather's wedding, Greif! I would rather stay in the old place, for a little while. And, after all, you have travelled so much, that you can tell me about Italy by the fire in the long evenings, and I shall enjoy it quite as much because you will be always with me.'

'Thank you, darling,' said Greif tenderly, as he drew her cheek to his, and he said no

more about the wedding trip on that afternoon.

The shadows were beginning to lengthen and the cool breeze was beginning to float down the valley, towards the heated plain far away, when Hilda and Greif rose from their seat under the shadow of the Hunger-Thurm, and strolled slowly along the broad road that led into the forest beyond. Whatever feeling of unpleasantness had been roused by Greif's unlucky speech, had entirely disappeared, but the discussion had left its impress far in the depths of Hilda's heart. It had never occurred to her in her whole life before that any one, and especially Greif, could doubt the reality or the strength of her love. What had now passed between them had left her with a new aspiration of which she had not hitherto been conscious. She felt that hereafter she must find some means of making Greif understand her. When he had said that he understood her better, she had very nearly been offended again, for she saw how very far he was from knowing what was in her heart. She

longed, as many have longed before, for some opportunity of sacrifice, of heroic devotion, which might show him in one moment the whole depth and breadth and loyalty of her love.

CHAPTER IV

WHILE Hilda and Greif were talking together the three older members of the family party had established themselves in a shady arbour of the garden, close to the low parapet, whence one could look down the sheer precipice to the leaping stream and watch the dark swallows shooting through the shadow and the sunshine, or the yellow butterflies and moths fluttering from one resting-place to another, drawn irresistibly to the gleaming water, out of which their wet wings would never bear them up again to the flower-garden of the castle above.

Frau von Greifenstein had seated herself in a straw chair with her parasol, her fan and her lap-dog, a little toy terrier which

was always suffering from some new and unheard-of nervous complaint, and on which the sensitive lady lavished all the care she could spare from herself. The miserable little creature shivered all summer, and lay during most of the winter half paralysed with cold in a wadded basket before the fire. It snapped with pettish impotence at every one who approached it, including its mistress, and the house was frequently convulsed because there was too much salt in its soup or too little sugar in its tea. Greifenstein's pointers generally regarded it with silent scorn, but occasionally, when it was being petted with more than usual fondness, they would sit up before it, thrust out their long tongues and shake their intelligent heads, with a grin that reached to their ears, and which was not unlike the derisively laughing grimace of a street-boy. Greifenstein never took any notice of the little animal, but on the other hand he was exceedingly careful not to disturb it. He probably considered it as a sort of familiar spirit attached to his wife's being. Had he

been an ancient Egyptian instead of a modern German, he would doubtless have performed a weekly sacrifice to it, with the same stiff but ready outward courtesy, and prompted by the same inward adherence to the principles of household peace, which so pre-eminently characterised him.

The Lady of Sigmundskron had neither parasol, nor lap-dog, nor fan. Her plain grey dress, made almost as simply as a nun's, contrasted oddly with the profusion of expensive bad taste displayed in her hostess's attire, as her serious white face and quiet noble eyes were strangely unlike Frau von Greifenstein's simpering, nervous countenance. The latter lady would certainly have been taken at first sight for the younger of the two, though she was in reality considerably older, but a closer examination showed an infinite number of minute lines, about the eyes, about the mouth, and even on her cheeks, not to mention that tell-tale wrinkle, the sign manual of advancing years, which begins just in front of the lobe of the ear and cuts its way downwards and backwards,

round the angle of the jaw. There was a disquieting air of improbability, too, about some of the colouring in her face, though it was far from apparent that she was painted. Her hair, at all events, was her own and was not dyed. And yet, though she possessed an abundance of it, such as many a girl might have envied, it remained utterly uninteresting and commonplace, for its faded straw-like colour was not attractive to the eye, and it grew so awkwardly and so straight as to put its possessor to much trouble in the arrangement of the youthful ringlets she thought so becoming to her style. These, however, she never relinquished under any circumstances whatever. Nevertheless, at a certain distance and in a favourable light, the whole effect was youngish, though one could not call it youthful, the more so as Frau von Sigmundskron who sat beside her was, at little over forty, usually taken for an old lady.

For some moments after they had all sat down, no one spoke. Then Greifenstein suddenly straightened himself, as though an

idea had occurred to him, and bending stiffly forward in his seat, addressed his cousin.

‘It gives us the greatest pleasure to see you once more in our circle,’ he said emphatically.

Frau von Sigmundskron looked up from her fine needlework, and gracefully inclined her head.

‘You are very kind,’ she answered. ‘You know how happy we are to be with you.’

‘Ah, it is too, too delightful!’ cried Frau von Greifenstein, with sudden enthusiasm, covering the toy terrier with her hand at the same time, as though anticipating some nervous movement on his part at the sound of her voice. The dog stirred uneasily and uttered a feeble little growl, turned round on her lap, bit his tail, and then settled himself to rest again. The lady watched all these movements with anxious interest, smoothing the folds of her dress at the spot on which the beast was about to lay his head.

‘Ah! my beloved, my treasure!’ she murmured in a strident whisper. ‘Did I

wake you! Dear, dear Pretzel! Do go to sleep! I call him Pretzel,' she added, looking up with a wild smile, 'because when he is curled up, with his little legs together, on his side, he is just the shape of those little twisted rolls my husband likes with his beer. It is a vulgar name, yes—but this is a vulgar age, dear cousin, you know, and we must not be behind our times!'

'Is it?' asked Frau von Sigmundskron without taking her eyes from her work.

'Oh, dreadfully so! Is it not, Hugo? I am sure I have heard you say so.'

'Without doubt, the times are changed,' replied Greifenstein. 'But I suppose that what is modern will always seem vulgar to old-fashioned people.'

'Ah, you do not call me old-fashioned, dear husband? Do you? Really, if I am old-fashioned, the times must have advanced very, very quickly! Eh? Dearest cousin, he calls us old-fashioned! You and me! Aber nein! How is it possible!'

A fit of spasmodic, unnatural laughter shook her from the tip of her lace parasol to

the toes of her small slippers, causing such a convulsion in the lap-dog's mind that he sat up on her knees and joined his cries with hers, until he had succeeded in attracting her attention, when he was instantly caressed and kissed and petted, with expressions of the greatest anxiety for his comfort. In about thirty seconds, however, the noises suddenly ceased, Pretzel went to sleep again and his mistress sat looking at the swallows and the flitting butterflies, her weary features expressing nothing that could be connected with mirth, any more than if she had not laughed for years. The repose could not last long, but Greifenstein felt that it was refreshing. In five and twenty years of married life, by dint of never exhibiting any annoyance at his wife's way of expressing herself, he had grown hardened against the disturbing effect of her smile and voice until he was really very little affected by either. So far as her conduct was concerned, he had never had anything to complain of, and since he had chosen her of his own free will, he considered that

one part of his duty consisted in suffering her eccentricities with patience and calm. The idea that a German who called himself a gentleman should not do his duty never entered his mind. On the other hand, his imperturbable manner sometimes irritated his wife, and in justice to her it must be allowed that his conversation in her presence was often very constrained.

‘The next time you come to Greifenstein,’ he said, leaning forward again and speaking to his cousin, it will be on the occasion of a very happy event.’

‘Yes,’ answered Frau von Sigmundskron with her gentle smile, ‘I hope so.’

‘I think that if you approve, and if your daughter has no objections——’

‘Objections!’ cried Frau von Greifenstein, suddenly waking from her reverie and turning her face to her companion’s with an engaging simper. ‘As if dear, sweet, beautiful Hilda could have any objections to marrying our Greif! Objections! Ah no, dear cousin, that youthful heart is already on fire!’

The words were uttered with such an affectation of softness that Pretzel did not move, as his mistress anxiously looked to see if he were awake when she had done speaking.

‘No,’ replied the other lady calmly. ‘She has none. But I do not think that was what my cousin Greifenstein meant.’

‘I meant that the marriage might take place early in the new year, if neither you nor your daughter had any objections,’ said Greifenstein.

‘But they have none—she has just told you so! Oh, Hugo, how dull men are, where love is concerned! Why should they object?’

‘Indeed, I cannot see any reason why they should not be married in January,’ said Hilda’s mother. But there was a shade of annoyance in her face, and she bit her lip a little as she bent over her work.

‘Very good, then,’ pursued Greifenstein, as though his wife had not spoken. ‘We will say the first week in January, if it is agreeable to you.’

‘It seems to me,’ observed Frau von Greifenstein with a fine affectation of irony, ‘that I might be consulted too.’

The Lady of Sigmundskron looked up quickly, but Greifenstein seemed to grow calmer than ever.

‘Pardon me, my dear wife,’ he answered, with a rather formal inclination of the head. ‘If you will be as kind as to remember our conversation of last night, you will call to mind that I asked your consent to the arrangement, and that you gave it at once.’

‘Ah yes!’ said Frau von Greifenstein. ‘It is true. I daresay we did speak of it. Ah, you see, the multiplicity of my household cares drives these things from my head!’

Thereupon her face grew vague and expressionless and she looked again at the birds and the butterflies.

‘Moreover,’ said Greifenstein, now addressing his wife directly, ‘I am sure you will recollect that we proposed to ask our cousin to stay with us until the young people return from their wedding trip.’

‘Yes—yes. I believe we did,’ replied Clara very vaguely and nodding her head slowly at each word. ‘Indeed we did!’ she exclaimed turning quickly with one of her unexpected smiles. ‘Of course! Dear, dear! What could you do, all by yourself up there among those towers? Such a solitary life, and your only daughter, too! How I pity you!’

‘You are very kind. But I am not much to be pitied. Many mothers lose their children altogether when they have married them. Hilda will always be near me, and we can see each other as often as we please.’

‘Your room at Greifenstein will always be ready to receive you,’ said the master of the house.

‘Oh, always, always!’ affirmed his wife with great vivacity.

The conversation languished. It was impracticable to discuss anything seriously in the presence of Frau von Greifenstein, for her inopportune interruptions rendered any connected talk impossible. Presently Greif-

enstein took a newspaper from his pocket and began to read the news of the day aloud to the two ladies. He did not read well, and the sound of his mechanical voice had a drowsy effect in the warm June air, like the clacking of an old-fashioned mill, dull, regular and monotonous. Neither of his companions, however, felt inclined for sleep. His wife watched the birds with a weary look, and his cousin plied her needle upon her fine work. During many hundreds of afternoons like this Frau von Greifenstein had sat in the same place hearing the same voice, and wearing the same expression. She rarely listened, though she occasionally uttered some exclamation more or less appropriate to what she thought she had heard. She was generally asking herself whether she had done well to accept the peace and the isolation that had fallen to her lot.

Her life was certainly neither happy nor gay. She had all that money could give, but there was no one to see that she had it. Like glory, wealth gives very little satis-

faction unless there is a public to witness its effects, and the pleasure we derive from them. Frau von Greifenstein had no public, and to a nature that is fond of show the privation is a great one. She could dress herself as gorgeously as she pleased, but there was no one to envy her splendour, nor even to admire it. For years she had played to an empty house. If, by any fantastic combination of events, it were possible that a fairly good actress should ever be obliged to play the same part every night for five and twenty years in an absolutely empty theatre, and if she did not go mad under the ordeal, she would perhaps turn out very like the Lady of Greifenstein. The stage was always set; the scenery was always of the best and newest; the vacant boxes and the yawning pit were brilliantly lighted; the costumes were by the best makers; the stage manager was punctual and in his place; the curtain went up every day for the performance; but Frau von Greifenstein's theatre was silent and untenanted, not a voice broke the stillness,

not a rustle of garments or a flutter of a programme in a spectator's hand made the silence less intense, not an echo of applause woke a thrill of pride or vanity in the heart of the solitary performer. And the poor actress was growing old, wasting her smiles, and her poses, and her bursts of laughter, and her sudden entries on the empty air, till by mechanical repetition they had grown so meaningless as to be almost terrifying and more than grotesque.

It was no wonder that she seemed so very silly. Incapable of finding any serious resource in her intellect, she had devoted her energies to outward things in a place where there was no one to applaud her efforts or flatter her vanity. Many women would have given it up and would have fallen into a state of listless indifference; some would have become insane. But with Frau von Greifenstein the desire to please by appearance and manner had outlasted any natural gift for pleasing which she might once have possessed, and had withstood the test of solitude and the damping

atmosphere created by a total absence of appreciation. It cannot be denied that her mind dwelt with bitterness on the hardness of her situation. More than once she had thought of changing her mode of life to plunge into a pietist course of simplicity and asceticism. But when the morning came, the emptiness of her existence made the diversion of personal adornment a necessity. There was nothing else to do. And yet she never pressed her husband to go and live in town, nor to fill the castle with visitors. She had lost all hold upon the current of events in the outer world; and as she looked at herself in her mirror, and saw better than any one else the remorseless signature of time etched deep in the face that had once been pretty, she felt a sharp pain in her breast, and a sinking at the heart, for she knew that it was all over and that she had grown old. There were even moments when she feared lest she were becoming ridiculous, for she had not originally been without a certain acute perception in regard to herself. But the fear

of ridicule is never strong unless a comparison of ourselves with others is possible, and Frau von Greifenstein lived too much alone to suffer long any such imaginary terrors. The time when she might still have made a figure in the world had gone by, however, and she knew it, and as any desire for change which she had formerly felt had sprung from the wish to be seen, rather than from the wish to see others, she was becoming resigned to her fate. She had reached that sad period at which half the pleasure of life consists in dreaming of what one might have done twenty years ago. It is a dreary amusement, but people who are very hopeless and solitary find it better than none at all.

Greifenstein read on, without much punctuation and with no change of tone. There was an article upon the European situation, another upon tariffs, the court news, the gazette, the festivities projected for a certain great event. It was all the same to him.

‘In view of the solemnity of the occasion,

his majesty has deigned to grant amnesty to all political——'

He stopped suddenly and coughed, running his eye along the lines that followed.

'To all what?' inquired his wife with a show of interest.

'To all political offenders concerned in the revolutionary movements of 1848 and 1849,' continued Greifenstein, who sat up very straight in his chair and tried to read more mechanically than usual, though his voice grew unaccountably husky. What followed was merely a eulogium upon the imperial clemency, and he read on rapidly without taking his eyes from the printed sheet. Frau von Sigmundskron uttered a little exclamation. She had pricked her thin white finger with her needle. The Lady of Greifenstein saw the tiny drop of blood, and immediately exhibited an amount of emotion out of all proportion with the accident.

'Oh, what have you done!' she cried, and she was pale with anxiety as she bent forward and insisted on seeing the scratch. 'But, my dear, you have wounded your-

self! Your finger is bleeding! Oh, it is too dreadful! You must have some water, and I will go and get you some court-plaster—do be careful! Bind it up with your handkerchief till I come!’

She rose quickly, and Pretzel for once was forgotten, and rolled from her knees to the grass, falling upon all-fours with a pathetic little squeak. But Frau von Greifenstein picked him up and fled towards the house in search of the plaster before he could make any further protest against such rough treatment.

‘My wife cannot bear the sight of blood,’ observed Greifenstein, who had lowered the newspaper and was looking over his glasses at his cousin’s hand.

‘The wound is not dangerous,’ she answered with an attempt to smile, but her eyes fixed themselves on Greifenstein’s with a look of anxious inquiry.

‘He will come back,’ he said, in a low voice, and the colour slowly left his face.

‘Do you think it possible?’ asked his cousin in the same tone.

‘It is certain. He is included in the amnesty. He has hoped for it these many years.’

‘Even if he does—he will not come here. You will never see him.’

‘No. I will not see him. But he will be in Germany. It is for Greif——’ he stopped, as though he were choking with anger, but excepting by the pallor of his stern features, his face expressed nothing of what he felt.

‘Greif will live here and will never see him either,’ said Frau von Sigmundskron. ‘Besides, he does not know——’

‘He knows. Some student told him and got a sabre cut for his pains. He knows, for he told me so only yesterday.’

‘That only makes it easier, then. Greif will be warned, and need never come into contact with him. Hilda would not understand, even if she were told. What can she know about revolutions and those wild times? I am sure he will never attempt to come here.’

‘He shall not sleep under my roof, not

if he is starving!’ exclaimed Greifenstein fiercely. ‘If he had not been the dog he is, he would have made an end of himself long ago.’

‘Do not say that, cousin. It was better that he should live out his life in a foreign country than do such a bad thing.’

‘I do not agree with you. When a man has taken Judas Iscariot for his model I think he ought to follow so eminent an example to the end.’

Frau von Sigmundskron did not wish to argue the point. Far down in her heart there existed an aristocratic and highly irreligious prejudice about such matters, and though her convictions told her that suicide was a crime, her personal sentiment of honour required that a man who had disgraced himself should put an end to his existence forthwith.

‘He will write, if he means to come,’ she observed, by way of changing the current of the conversation.

‘It would be more like him to force himself upon me without warning,’ said Greifen-

stein, folding the paper with his lean strong hands and drawing his thumb-nail sharply along the doubled edges. The action was unconscious, but was mechanically and neatly performed, like most things the man did. Then he opened it, spread it out and looked again at the passage that contained the news. Suddenly his expression changed.

‘I do not believe he is included in the amnesty,’ he said. ‘He was not convicted for a political misdeed, but for a military crime involving a breach of trust. He aggravated his offence by escaping. I do not believe that he is included.’

‘But will he not believe it himself?’ asked Frau von Sigmundskron.

‘It will be at his peril, then.’ Greifenstein’s face expressed a momentary satisfaction. Again he folded the paper with the utmost care, evidently reflecting upon the situation.

‘I suppose he will be sent back to the fortress,’ observed his companion.

‘I would almost rather he were pardoned, than that,’ answered Greifenstein gloomily.

‘The whole scandal would be revived—my name would appear, it would be a fresh injury to Greif. And my wife knows nothing of it. She would hear it all.’

‘Does she know nothing?’ asked Frau von Sigmundskron, looking curiously at her cousin.

‘Not a word. She never heard his name.’

‘I could not help supposing that she left us just now because she was disturbed at the news—and she has not come back.’

‘She is not so diplomatic as that,’ answered Greifenstein with something like a grim smile. ‘She forgets things easily, and has probably been detained by some household matter.’

Frau von Sigmundskron could not help admiring the way in which Greifenstein always spoke of his wife, excusing her more noticeable eccentricities, and affecting to ignore her minor peculiarities, with a consistent dignity few men could have sustained in the society of such a woman. It was a part of his principle of life, and he never deviated from it. It had perhaps

been strengthened by the necessity of teaching Greif to respect his mother and to treat her with a proper show of reverence, but the prime feeling itself was inseparable from his character, and did honour to it. Whatever he might think of his wife, no living person should ever suspect that he could have wished her to be different. He had chosen her and he must abide by his choice.

But his cousin was a very keen-sighted person and understood him better than he guessed, admiring his forbearance and giving him full credit for his constancy. She had her own opinions concerning his wife, and did not like her; nor was she quite free from a disturbing apprehension lest at some future time Greif might develop some of his mother's undesirable peculiarities. At present, indeed, there seemed to be nothing which could justify such fears; but she found it hard to believe that the young man had inherited nothing whatever from his mother. She could remember the time when Frau von Greifenstein had been younger and fresher,

when her hair had been less dull and colourless, and when her complexion had possessed something of that radiance which was so especially noticeable in her son. And yet Hilda's mother felt instinctively that she could never dislike Greif, even if he became vain and foolish, which did not seem very probable.

For some minutes neither of the cousins spoke, and Frau von Sigmundskron sat doing nothing, which was altogether contrary to her nature, her work lying upon her knees and her hands joined one upon the other. As for Greifenstein, he had at last folded the paper to his satisfaction and had returned it to his pocket. Presently the sound of his wife's footsteps was heard upon the gravel path. She seemed less excited than when she had left her seat.

'I have kept you waiting,' she said, as she came up. 'I could not find what I wanted, and when I did that dreadful Pretzel was swallowing a pair of scissors and nearly had a fit, so that I had to give him a hot bath to calm him. He is such a care !

You have no idea—but here it is, if it is not too late. I am so dreadfully sorry! I thought I should have died! Do let me put it upon your finger.'

The scratch had entirely disappeared, but Frau von Sigmundskron did not wish to appear ungracious, or ungrateful, and held out her hand without any remark. It would have seemed uncharitable to make Clara's errand look wholly superfluous before Greifenstein. But he paid very little attention to what was passing, for he was preoccupied with his own thoughts, and before long he rose, excused himself for going away by saying that he had some pressing correspondence, and left the two ladies to their own devices.

Frau von Sigmundskron felt rather uncomfortable, as she always did when she was alone with her hostess. To-day she had an unpleasant consciousness that she was in the way, and that, if she were not present, Clara would have already disappeared, in order to be alone. She resolved to make the interview as short as possible.

‘The weather is very warm,’ she remarked, as a preparatory move towards going into the house.

‘Is it?’ asked her companion as though she had been told something very unusual.

‘It seems so to me,’ responded the baroness, rather surprised that the fact should be questioned. ‘But then, it always seems warmer here after Sigmundskron.’

‘Yes — yes, perhaps so. I daresay it is. How very good of his majesty—is it not?’

‘To grant an amnesty?’

‘Yes, to forgive those dreadful creatures who did so much harm. I am sure I would not have done it—would you? But you are so good—did you ever know any of them?’

‘Oh no, never. I was——’ She was going to say that she had been too young, but she was stopped by a feeling of consideration for Clara. ‘I was never in the way of seeing them,’ she said, completing the sentence.

‘As for me,’ said Clara, ‘I was a mere child, quite a little thing you know.’ An engaging smile—poor woman, it was more than half mechanical and unconscious—emphasised this assertion of her youth.

Frau von Sigmundskron, in whom enforced economy had developed an unusual facility for mental arithmetic, could not refrain from making a quick calculation. Forty-eight from eighty-eight, forty—a young thing, perhaps ten—ten and forty, fifty. Clara was virtually admitting that she was fifty, and if she owned to that, she must be nearer sixty. In other words, she must have been well over thirty when she had married Greifenstein. She was certainly wonderfully well preserved. And yet Greifenstein had more than once told his cousin that he had married his wife when she was a widow five and twenty years of age. This was the first occasion upon which Clara had ever let fall a word which could serve as a starting-point in the calculation, and though the baroness was the best and kindest of mortals she would not have been

a woman if she had failed to notice the statement, or to draw from it such conclusions as it offered to her ingenuity.

‘The people who profit by the pardon will be old men,’ she remarked.

‘Old?’ repeated Clara with a scarcely perceptible start. ‘Not so very. They may be less than sixty—a man of sixty is still young at that age. I wonder whether any of them will profit by the permission to return. What do you think, Therese?’

The question was asked with every show of interest, and the baroness raised her quiet eyes from her work. She and Clara very rarely called each other by their first names. They generally avoided the difficulty by a plentiful use of the convenient designation of cousin. Frau von Greifenstein evidently meant to be more than usually confidential, and her companion wondered what was coming, and began to feel nervous.

‘Really,’ she answered, ‘I do not know. I suppose that a man who has been expelled from his country and exiled for many years, would naturally take the first opportunity

of returning. I should think it probable. On the other hand——’ she stopped a moment, to smooth a stitch in her work.

‘On the other hand?’ repeated Clara anxiously.

‘Well, I was going to say that in forty years, a man might learn to love an adopted country as well as his own, and might prefer to stay there. It would depend upon the man, upon his character, his tastes, perhaps upon whether he had gone into the revolution out of mistaken patriotism, or out of personal ambition.’

‘Do you think so? Why?’ Frau von Greifenstein seemed deeply interested.

‘Because I fancy that a patriot would come back at any rate. His love of his country would be the strongest element in his nature. An ambitious man would either have found a field for his ambition elsewhere in forty years, or the passion would have died a natural death by that time.’

‘Ah yes! There is truth in that! But what a dreadfully extraordinary position!’ she exclaimed, with one of her unexpected

bursts of laughter. 'What a novel! Do you not see it! Oh, if I were only a novelist, what a plot I could make out of that! Dearest cousin, is it not time to have coffee?'

CHAPTER V

FROM that day the life at Greifenstein became even more drearily monotonous than it had been before, for all the party excepting Greif and Hilda. To any one not accustomed to the atmosphere the existence would have been unbearable, but humanity can grow used to anything by degrees. A stranger finding himself unexpectedly at the castle would have felt that the sweet air of the forest was poisoned at that one point by some subtle and undefinable element, that appealed to none of the senses in particular, but oppressed them all alike. The sensation was not like that caused by a vague anxiety, or by the shadow of a coming event creeping mysteriously onward, a mere uneasiness as to the result which must

soon be apparent, but of which it is not possible to say whether it will be good or bad. It was worse than that, for if there were to be any result at all, it must be very bad indeed. Greifenstein himself felt as he supposed a criminal might feel who was hourly expecting discovery. If his half-brother returned, the suffering caused by his presence in the country would be almost as great as the shame of having committed his crime could have been. Frau von Sigmundskron was more indifferent, for she had never known the man, and her knowledge of what he had done was less accurate than Greifenstein's. But she was nevertheless very uncomfortable when she thought of his appearance. It had been judged best to acquaint Greif with the proclamation of the amnesty, in order that he might be prepared for any contingency, but the news made very little impression upon him, for he had learned the existence of his disgraced relative so recently that he had from the first feared his return, and had thought of what he should do ever

since. Moreover he had Hilda with him, and he was very young, two circumstances which greatly diminished his anxiety about the future. He was very glad, however, that his academical career was so near its end, for he reflected that it would be tiresome to be constantly fighting duels about his uncle. For the present, he had abandoned the idea of taking active service in the army.

Greifenstein was more silent, and stiff, and severely conscientious than ever, and his daily habits grew if possible more unbendingly regular, as though he were protesting already against any unpleasant disturbance in his course of life which might be in store for him. When he was alone with his cousin, he never recurred to the subject of Rieseneck or his return, though the baroness constantly expected him to do so, and watched his inscrutable face to detect some signs of a wish to discuss the matter. For two reasons, she would not take the initiative in bringing up the topic. In the first place, as he was the person most nearly concerned, her tact told her that it was for him to decide

whether he would talk of his brother or not. Secondly she was silent, because she had noticed something, and knew that he had noticed it also. Frau von Greifenstein's behaviour was slowly changing, and the change had begun from the hour in which her husband had read from the paper the paragraph relating to the amnesty.

From the first moment, Frau von Sigmundskron had suspected that Clara was affected by the news, and her first impression had very naturally been that she knew the story and had learned it from her husband. There was nothing improbable in the idea, and but for Greifenstein's words, she would have taken it for granted that this was the true state of the case. He, however, had emphatically denied that Clara was in the secret, and had evidently looked forward with pain to the moment when he should be obliged to communicate it to her. He was the most scrupulously truthful of men, and could not have had any object in concealing the point from his cousin. And yet there was no doubt that his wife's man-

ner had changed, and the baroness could see that Greifenstein was aware of it. Clara's vague absence of mind, which had formerly been only occasional, was increasing, while her fits of spasmodic laughter became fewer, till at last whole days passed during which her features were not disturbed by a single smile. There was indeed little to laugh at in her home, at the best, but she had laughed frequently nevertheless, because people had told her long ago that it was becoming to her style of beauty. But she was growing daily more silent and abstracted, scarcely speaking at all, and not even pretending to be amused at anything. Greifenstein watched her for a week, and then inquired whether she were ill. She thanked him and said there was nothing the matter, but during some hours after he had asked the question she made an evident effort to return to her former manner. The effect was painful in the extreme. Her affected mirth seemed more hollow than ever, and her words more incoherent. Frau von Sigmundskron began to fear that Clara was

going mad, but the latter was not equal to sustaining the effort long, and soon relapsed into her former silence. Her face grew suddenly very old. She moved more slowly. The wrinkles deepened almost visibly, and she became daily thinner. It was evident that something was preying upon her, and that the mental suffering was reacting upon her body.

Greifenstein said nothing more, and he told no one what he thought. If his cousin had not suggested to him that Clara must know the story, he would have supposed that she was ill, and would have sent for a physician. It would never have entered his mind that she could have understood all that the proclamation of the amnesty meant to him. He would have supposed it a coincidence that she should have been first affected by the malady on that particular day. But the baroness's remark had had the effect of fixing in his mind what had immediately preceded it. He remembered how his wife had suddenly taken advantage of a most trivial excuse, to

show an amount of exaggerated emotion unusual even for her. He remembered her long absence and her changed expression when she returned, her silence that evening and her increasing taciturnity ever since. The connexion between the paragraph and her conduct seemed certain, and Greifenstein set himself systematically to think out some explanation for the facts. In five and twenty years Rieseneck's name had never been mentioned in her presence. If she had ever heard of him it must have been before she had married Greifenstein. It was possible that she might feel the disgrace involved in the man's return so keenly as to suffer physically at the thought of it; but Greifenstein's common sense told him that this was very improbable. In such a case it would have been far more natural for her to come to her husband and ask to be told the whole truth. It was easier to believe that her conduct was due to some other cause, that she had really never heard of Rieseneck's existence, and that there was some other person whose

possible return, in consequence of the amnesty, she dreaded as much as Greifenstein feared the reappearance of his half-brother. Many persons had been involved in the revolutionary movements of 1848 and had been obliged to leave the country in consequence. Clara's first husband had died of heart disease in Dresden in the year 1860, and consequently could not have been connected with the events of those times in any way to his discredit. She had shown Greifenstein the official notice of his death in an old gazette of the period. But it was not unlikely that in those unsettled times one of her relations might have got into trouble and been exiled or imprisoned. At the time of her marriage however she had acknowledged no relative excepting an elderly aunt who had been present at the wedding, but who had died since, without ever paying a visit to the castle, and no other connexion of hers had ever appeared upon the scene. Greifenstein was well aware that he had hurried the marriage by every means in his power. He had been

fascinated by Clara, and had been madly in love. They had met in the Bavarian highlands and had been married two months later in Munich, with very little formality. Since that time Greifenstein had always avoided going to Dresden, on account of the painful associations the city must have for his wife, and had preferred not to visit Berlin, which had been the scene of his brother's crime and trial. The consequence was that neither of the two had ever been among people who had known them previously.

The idea that two disgraced persons might come back from exile, instead of one, was extremely disquieting to Greifenstein's peace of mind. He knew well enough what to do with Rieseneck if he appeared. He would shut the gates and let him shift for himself. But the other man would be in search of Clara. He wondered who he might be, and what their relations could have been, whether he would turn out to be a brother, an uncle, or merely some man who had loved her in former days, a mere

rejected suitor. Even should he prove to be her brother, he could not reproach her for her silence, since he found himself in exactly the same situation. That contingency, however, was remote. It was extremely unlikely that each should have a brother who had been convicted of evil deeds in the revolution, considering how short a time the disturbance had lasted. The theory that the man was a disappointed pretender to her hand was infinitely more probable. In any case, Greifenstein made up his mind that a person existed whose return Clara feared, and the prospect of whose appearance was so painful as to affect her health.

For some time he hesitated as to the course he should pursue. He was certainly free to tell her his suspicions, on condition that he told her of his own apprehensions at the same time. To get her secret without giving his in return would be unfair, according to his notions of honour, even apart from the consideration that if Riese-neck came back he would ultimately be

obliged to confide in her. But, on the other hand, there was a possibility that Rieseneck might not come back, after all, and in that case, if he had told her everything, he would have submitted himself to a painful humiliation without necessity. He resolved to keep his own counsel and at the same time to ask his wife no questions.

Rieseneck was in South America, but Greifenstein had no reason for supposing that the person whose possible return so greatly disturbed Clara had betaken himself to so distant a country. He might be in Italy, in France, in England, anywhere within eight and forty hours' journey. He might therefore arrive at any moment after the proclamation.

But no stranger came, though the days became weeks, and the weeks months, until it was almost time for Greif to go back to Schwarzburg. Greifenstein began to think that the problematical personage was dead, though Clara evidently did not share his opinion, for she never regained her former

manner. Under any other circumstances Greifenstein would have enjoyed the change, the absence of irrelevant interruption, the rest from her unnatural laughter, the gravity of her tired face. He was far from being satisfied, however, and his earnest mind brooded constantly over the possibilities of the unknown future. His situation was the harder to bear because he could not explain it to his son, the only human being for whom he felt a strong natural sympathy. It would have seemed like teaching the boy to suspect his mother of some evil.

Greif secretly wondered what was happening in his home. The atmosphere was unbearably oppressive, and if he had not been able to spend most of his time with Hilda he would have asked his father's permission to take his knapsack and go for a walking expedition in Switzerland, on the chance of falling in with a fellow-student. He had noticed the change in his mother from the first, and asked her daily if she were not better. Clara would not admit

that she was ill, but she looked at Greif with an expression to which he was not accustomed and which made him nervous. Hitherto he had never quite known whether she loved him or not. She had spoiled him as much as she dared when he was a child, but there had always been something in her way of indulging him which, even to the little boy, had not seemed genuine. Children rarely love those who spoil them, and never trust them. Their keen young sense detects the false note in the character, and draws its own conclusions, which are generally very just. Greif had found out when he was very young that his mother gave him everything he asked for, not because she loved him, but because she was too weak to refuse, and too indolent to care for the result. He had found her inaccurate in what she told him, and negligent in fulfilling the little promises upon which a child builds such great hopes, though she was always ready to pay damages for her forgetfulness by excessive indulgence in something else, when it was agreeable to

her. Greif had discovered that his father rarely promised him anything, but that if he did, it was something worth having, and that he was scrupulously exact in keeping his word about such matters, even at the expense of his own convenience. He consequently admired his father and was proud to imitate him; whereas he very soon learned to consider his mother as a person of inferior intelligence, who did not know enough to be accurate, and who did not respect herself enough to fulfil her promises. But for his father's influence he would probably have ended by showing what he felt. Greifenstein, however, exacted from him an unvarying reverence and courtesy towards his mother, and never, even in moments of the greatest confidence, permitted the boy to criticise the least of her actions.

To tell Greif of the suspicions which agitated his own mind was therefore contrary to Greifenstein's fixed principles, and consequently utterly impossible. In reply to his questions about his mother's health the only answer which was at once plausible

and in accordance with truth was the plain statement that Clara denied being ill, but that she nevertheless appeared to be suffering from some unknown complaint. Greif was not satisfied, but his own ingenuity could discover no explanation of the facts, and he was obliged to hold his peace. His mother's manner and her look when he spoke to her disturbed him. It was as though her uncertain and careless affection had suddenly developed into something more true and sincere. There was something wistful in the fixed gaze of her eyes, as though she feared to know what was in his heart, and yet longed for some more frank expression of his love for her than that mere reverential courtesy which he had been taught to show his mother since he was a child. Being very young and of a very kind heart, Greif began to wonder whether he had not misunderstood her throughout many years. He possessed that kind of nature which cannot long refrain from returning any sort of affection it receives, provided that affection appears to

be genuine. He gradually began to feel a responsive thrill in his heart when he saw that his mother's sad eyes watched his movements and lingered upon his face. The tone of his voice began to change when he addressed her, though he was scarcely conscious of it. His words became gentler and more sympathetic, as his thoughts of her assumed a kindlier disposition. He began to reproach himself with his former coldness and he frankly owned to himself that he had misunderstood her.

It had always been his custom to go to his mother's boudoir in the morning, when he had not already left the house before she was visible. It was rather a formal affair. Greif knocked at the door and waited for her answer. Being admitted, he went to his mother and kissed her hand. She kissed his forehead in return. He asked her how she was, and she inquired what he was going to do during the day. After five minutes of conversation, he generally took leave of her with the same ceremony, and departed. He usually avoided being with

her at any other time, and accident rarely brought them together in the course of the day, for Greif was always with Hilda or with his father. Very gradually, he began to find this morning visit less irksome. He fancied that his mother would willingly have detained him a little longer, but that she felt how little he could care for her society as compared with that of Hilda. Then, too, she had grown so sad and silent as to excite in him a sort of pity. At last the feeling that was drawing them closer found expression.

Greif had made his usual visit one morning and was about to leave the room. Her sorrowful, faded eyes looked up to his, and slowly filled with tears. He felt an irresistible impulse to speak, and yielded to it.

‘Mother,’ he said, kneeling down beside her, and taking her hand affectionately in his, ‘what is it? Why are you ill, and sad? Will you not tell me?’

She looked at him a moment longer, wonderingly, as though hardly believing what she saw. Then she broke down. The

long restrained tears welled up and rolled over her thin cheeks, making lines and patches in the pink powder, at once grotesque and pitiful. The carefully curled ringlets of colourless hair contrasted strangely with the sudden havoc in her complexion. Perhaps she was conscious of it, for she tried to turn her face away, so that Greif should not see it. Then all at once, with a heartrending sob, she let her head fall forward upon his shoulder, while her nervous, wasted hands grasped his two arms convulsively.

‘O Greif! I am a very miserable old woman!’ she cried.

‘What is it, mother? Oh, tell me what is the matter!’ he exclaimed, not knowing what to say, but amazed at the outburst he had so little anticipated.

For some moments she could say nothing. Greif held her, and prevented her from slipping off her seat. Looking down, though he could not see her face, he could see well enough how the tears fell fast and thick upon the rough sleeve of his shooting

coat and trickled down the woollen material till they rolled off at his elbow. He did not know what to do, for he had never seen her cry before, and was indeed little accustomed to woman's weeping.

'Dearest mother,' he said at last, 'I am so sorry for you! If you would only tell me——'

'Ah Greif—my son—if I thought you loved me—a little—I should be less unhappy!'

'But I do. Oh, forgive me, if I have never shown you that I do!' He was in great distress, for he was really moved, and a great wave of repentance for all his past coldness suddenly overwhelmed his conscience.

'If it were only true!' sobbed the poor lady. 'But it is all my fault—oh, Greif, Greif—my boy—promise that you will not forsake me, whatever happens to me!'

'Indeed, I promise,' answered Greif in great surprise. 'But what can happen? What is it that you fear, mother?'

'Oh, I am very foolish,' she replied with

a hysterical attempt at a laugh. 'Perhaps it is nothing, after all.'

Her tears burst out afresh. Greif attempted in vain to soothe her, calling her by endearing names he had never used to her before, and feeling vaguely surprised at the expressions of affection that fell from his lips. All at once, with a passionate movement, she threw her arms round his neck and kissed him. Then, pushing him aside, she rose quickly and fled to the next room before he could regain his feet.

For some moments he stood looking at the closed door. Then his instinct told him that she would not return, and he slowly left the room, pondering deeply on what he had seen and heard.

The next time they met she made no reference to what had passed, and Greif's natural delicacy warned him not to approach the subject. Had there been such previous intimacy between the two as might be expected to exist between mother and son, an explanation could scarcely have been avoided. As it was, however, both felt that it was

better to leave the matter alone. The bond between them was stronger than before, and that was enough for Clara. She experienced a sense of comfort in Greif's mere existence which somewhat lightened the intolerable burthen of her secret. As for Greif himself, the situation appeared to him more mysterious than ever, and the air of the house more oppressive. It seemed to him that every one was watching every one else, and that at the same time each member of the household was concealing something from the others. He felt that it would be a relief to return to the thoughtless life of the University, even at the expense of a separation from Hilda.

Hilda had not failed to notice what was so apparent to every one else, and had asked her mother questions concerning the evident depression that reigned in the household. But the good baroness had only answered that, whatever might be the matter, it was no concern of Hilda's nor of her own; and that when disagreeable things occurred in other people's houses it was a duty not to see

them. Hilda's ideas about ill health were exceedingly vague, and she contented herself with supposing that Frau von Greifenstein was ill, and that sick persons probably always behaved as she did. At last the time came for Greif's departure.

The sense of impending evil was in some measure accountable for the unusual emotion exhibited at the parting. He had never taken leave of his mother so affectionately before, nor had he before seen the tears start into her eyes as she kissed him and said good-bye. Never before had the grip of his father's hand seemed to convey so much of sympathy, nor did he remember that his own voice had ever at other times trembled as though it were sticking in his throat. Even Frau von Sigmundskron was a little moved and pressed his hand warmly when he kissed her, though she said nothing. Hilda was very silent, and never took her eyes from him. He had bidden her farewell before taking leave of the rest, at their old haunt by the Hunger-Thurm. There had not been many words, and there had been

no tears, but it had been nevertheless the saddest parting Greif ever remembered. The day was cloudy and a soft wind was making melancholy music among the grand old trees. Their own voices had sounded discordant and out of tune, and the words that might have expressed what they felt would not be found, and perhaps were not needed.

But when the last minute was come the whole party went out together to the gate where the carriage was standing. Greif found himself with Hilda, separated for a moment from the rest. She laid her hand upon his arm and spoke in a low voice.

‘Something evil is going to happen to you, Greif,’ she said. There was something in the accents that chilled him, but he tried to smile.

‘I hope not, sweetheart,’ he answered.

‘I am sure of it,’ said Hilda in a tone of conviction. ‘I cannot tell why—only, remember, whatever happens—it will be something terrible—I shall always love you—always, always.’

The others came up, and her voice sank to a whisper as she repeated the last word. Greif looked anxiously into her face, and saw that she was pale, and that her flashing blue eyes were veiled and dim. He was startled, for he had never seen such a change in her before. But there was no time for words. He whispered a loving answer, but she seemed not to hear his words as she stood against the huge rough masonry of the gate, gazing down the drive in the direction of the Hunger-Thurm. As he was driven rapidly away, he looked back and waved his hat. The others had stepped forward upon the pavement on one side of the gate, but Hilda had not moved. Then as the turn of the road was about to hide the castle from view, he saw her cover her face with both her hands and turn back into the shadow of the deep gateway.

Greif settled himself in his comfortable seat, wondering what it all meant. It was very strange that Hilda should have so suddenly and so forcibly expressed the same idea that had agitated his mother a few days

earlier. It was impossible that they could have talked together, or that they could be thinking of the same thing. There was no sympathy between them, and besides, if Hilda had learned anything from Frau von Greifenstein which Greif did not know, she would certainly have told him of it, especially as this impending catastrophe threatened him as well as his mother. He was too firmly opposed to all sorts of superstition to believe that Hilda had received any supernatural warning of an event about to occur. But for the conversation that had taken place with his mother, he would unhesitatingly have told himself that Hilda was yielding to a foolish presentiment raised by the sorrow of parting. Persons in love are very apt to fancy each separation the last, and to imagine some dreadful disaster to be in store for the object of their affections. He flattered himself that his own common sense was too strong to be shaken by such absurdities, but he owned that the sensation was a natural one. Without giving way to presentiments he nevertheless always felt

that something might happen to Hilda before his return, and it was not strange that she should feel the same anxiety in regard to him. The impulsive expression she had given to her fear was not in itself surprising, and if she had turned pale for the first time in her life, it was perhaps because her heart was really waking to something stronger than that even, emotionless affection she had hitherto bestowed upon him.

There was a similarity, however, between his mother's words and Hilda's, which was not so easily explained, and the coincidence was oddly in harmony with the oppressive constraint that had reigned at Greifenstein during the vacation. Greif could not help thinking very seriously of it all, as he drove rapidly through the forest to the railway station; so seriously indeed, that he at last shook himself with a movement of impatience, said to himself that he was growing superstitious as a girl, and lit a cigar with the strong determination not to give way to such nonsense.

Smoking did not help him, nor the

prospect of meeting a fellow-student or two in the course of the afternoon. He tried to think of the life that was before him at the University, of the serious work he must do, of the opening festival of all the united Korps at the beginning of the term, of his own responsibilities as the head of the association to which he belonged, of the pleasant hours he would spend in discussing with youthful shallowness the deepest subjects that can occupy the human mind, deciding, between a draft of brown ale and a whiff of tobacco, that Schopenhauer was right in one point, and that Kant was wrong in another. But, for the present, at least, none of those things could by mere anticipation distract his thoughts from the matter which occupied them.

All through the long drive, Hilda's face was before him and her voice was in his ear, repeating her strange warning. She had said that she should always love him. His mother had implored him not to forsake her in her trouble, whatever it might be. At the same time, his father was in the

greatest anxiety concerning Rieseneck's movements. Could there be any connexion between that affair and the conduct of the two women? Again his common sense rose up with an energetic protest, and displayed to him all the absurdity of the hypothesis. Could Rieseneck's possible return affect his mother more than his father? Could that doubtful event suffice to rouse Hilda's fears to such a pitch? If the man came back, he would come as a suppliant, entreating to be received once, at least, on tolerance. He would come as a penitent prodigal might, to get a word of compassion from his brother, perhaps to borrow money. He could do no harm to any one, beyond the moral shame he brought upon his relatives by prolonging his wretched existence. He was certainly not a particularly dangerous person to Greif himself, and Hilda's warning had been essentially personal, having no reference to any one else. He could not understand it, and grew impatient again, realising how deeply he had been impressed. The forest looked un-

usually gloomy, and added by its melancholy solemnity to the depression of his spirits. He was glad when he saw through the trees the smart wooden railway station with its coloured signals, its metal roof, and its air of animation. He could not help thinking that the effect was something like that once produced upon him when he had come back to the University town from the funeral of an eminent person whom he had never seen. He had been obliged to attend the burial with the whole body of the students, and had stood more than an hour in the churchyard before he could get away. He remembered how unusually bright and lively the town had appeared to him by contrast when he returned. Even the thought of Hilda could not now make the recollection of his home a pleasant one, for Hilda herself was intimately connected, by her last words, with the whole impression of funereal gloominess from which the busy railway station furnished him with the means of escape.

CHAPTER VI

THE system of student life in Germany with its duelling, its associations into Korps, its festivals, and its rabid tenacity to tradition, has frequently been pronounced ridiculous by European and American writers, though it does not appear that those who laugh at it have entered into Korps life themselves, even when they have resided during a considerable time at a German University. There is, however, much to be said in favour of its existence in the only country where it has taken root as a permanent institution; and since it is necessary to follow Greif's history from the time when he was still a student, some explanation of a matter generally little understood may not be out of place at this point.

Every one knows that a German University has no resemblance, even in principle, with what English-speaking people generally understand by the word University. The students do not live in communities, nor in any set of buildings appropriated for their dwelling. The University, so far as its habitation is concerned, means only the lecture-rooms. Instructors and pupils live where they please and as they please, according to their individual fortune or pleasure. The students are differently situated from other members of society in one respect. They are not amenable to the police for any ordinary offence, but in such cases are brought before the University authorities, and are liable to be confined in the University prison, attending the lectures belonging to their course, during the period of their detention, for which purpose they are let out and shut up again at stated hours. This corresponds to some extent with the English system of 'gating.'

A very large body of young men, of various

ages, find themselves almost entirely their own masters, at an age when the English undergraduate is bound to be at home at twelve o'clock, to attend chapel and hall dinners, besides fulfilling the obligations imposed by a regular course of study. They live in lodgings, free of any supervision whatever, they eat where and when they please, if they do not choose to hear lectures there is no one to oblige them to do so, for they are supposed to possess enough common sense to know that the loss is theirs if they fail at their examinations. It is natural that under these circumstances they should form associations among themselves. In every University there will be a certain number of students from each of the country's principal provinces. Fellow-countrymen will generally be drawn together when they are forced to live under similar conditions in one place. To this instinct may be traced the origin of Korps, and, generally, of all associations that wear colours, except the so-called Teutonia, which is probably the oldest of all, and which was originally a

political institution having for its object the promotion of liberal ideas together with the unity of Germany. There are Korps of the same name, but the two are always quite distinct and their colours are generally different.

There are three classes of associations. The Burschenschaften, or fellowships, the Landsmannschaften, or fellow-countrymen's unions, and the Korps. The latter word is French, and was formerly spelt 'Corps'; as no better word could be found, or introduced, the German initial letter is used to distinguish the meaning when used in this sense. Besides these three classes of acknowledged associations, all wearing colours, and recognised by the University, there are usually a number of subordinate ones, termed contemptuously 'Blasen,' which may be translated 'bubbles,' a designation given on account of their supposed instability.

Although admission to these unions is generally, and probably always, obtained by ballot, they are not clubs in any ordinary sense of the word. Each has a habitation

or lodge, called a Kneipe, or drinking-hall, and a fencing-room, or a share in the use of one, but there is no set of apartments corresponding to a club, nor intended for the same manifold purposes. The organisation and object of the union require no such conveniences.

The Korps rank highest in estimation and are generally the most exclusive. In a country where caste prejudice has attained to such gigantic proportions as it has in Germany, its effects are felt very early in life; and in Universities where every advantage of education is placed within easy reach of the very poorest, a course of lectures for a term often costing but one pound sterling, it is impossible that there should not be circles formed, in a regular scale, by young men whose fortunes are more or less alike. Upon these social and financial distinctions the Korps have grown to be what they are.

Every Korps has three orders of members, and three regular officers, to each of whom is assigned one department in the manage-

ment of the associations. The orders consist of two regular and one irregular. The lowest and least important, is considered irregular, and those who are not admitted further have no claim to anything but a place in the drinking-hall, and the protection of the regular Korps. They may be men of any age, but are generally students who are prevented from fighting by some physical defect, or by the serious objection of their parents, without whose consent no one is supposed to be admitted to the full fellowship of the union.

The second order consists of novices, who are designated by the name of 'foxes.' The appellation is probably derived from the custom of playing a kind of game, at the opening of the term, which is called the fox-hunt, and in which the novices, riding astride of chairs, are made to run the gauntlet through the 'fellows' who are armed with blackened corks, and who, without moving from their places, attempt to smudge the faces of the youngsters as they hop past. These 'foxes' are young

students who have just joined, and who are not admitted to the rank of fellows until they have fought a certain number of times. They are raised to the higher dignity after a ballot, at which they are not present, and the term of probation generally lasts six months, or one term.

The fellows, or Burschen, are full-fledged Korps students, eligible to become officers. The officers are three, and are called respectively the first, second and third, 'in charge.' The first is the chief, who presides at formal meetings and in the drinking-hall, where the Korps assembles officially on two evenings of the week. He also represents the Korps at the weekly meetings of all the representatives. The second in charge manages all affairs relative to fighting, and is personally responsible to the association for all formalities relating to the duels of its members. If any fellow, or novice, has challenged, or been challenged by, any one else, he must immediately report the affair to the second in charge, who arranges the meeting for him, and warns him, at least

twelve hours beforehand, of the time appointed. The third in charge is secretary and treasurer; he keeps the minutes of all meetings, collects the dues from the members, pays the bills, and is responsible for the financial department and correspondence.

In well-conducted Korps, and there are many such, the president considers himself morally bound to see that all the members attend their lectures regularly. That the associations are not generally mere idle, riotous bands of students, is sufficiently shown by the fact that almost every prominent man in German public life has belonged to one of them, from the great chancellor downwards. Generally speaking, too, each novice is considered to be personally under the charge of one of the fellows, whose duty it is to keep him out of trouble and to see that he is not idle. It will be seen that the system of organisation is good, and that in reality it has a strong military element, like most organisations which find favour in Germany.

But if it is military it is also militant,

and it is the fact that fighting is one of its chief objects, which has caused it to be so much abused by foreigners. It is necessary in the first place to understand the conditions of the sanguinary battles between the Korps, and the points by which they are distinguished from the more serious affairs which are occasionally settled by appeal to arms.

The ordinary student's duel is not a dangerous affair, though it is often far more serious than is commonly supposed. The weapon used is a long, light rapier, square at the point, two-edged and sharpened like a razor down the whole length of the front, and to about nine inches from the point at the back. The hilt is a roomy basket of iron, though in some Universities a bell-hilted sword is used, and in that case the guard is similar to the first position in sabre fencing or single stick. The blade is very pliable and not highly tempered, so that in unskilful hands it is apt to bend and become useless.

The law requires that the combatants

should both wear an iron protection over the eyes, lest the loss of sight should render the student useless for military service. To protect life also, a heavy silk scarf bandage is placed round the throat, completely protecting the jugular vein and the carotid artery. The right arm, which in this peculiar fencing is used to parry the cut in tierce, is also protected by bandages, and the body is covered by a leathern cuirass, heavily padded, from the middle of the breast to the knees. It will be seen that the whole head, excepting the eyes, is exposed, as well as the chest and shoulders. Thrusting is forbidden as well as the cut in second, below guard, but the latter is permitted when either of the combatants is left-handed, owing to the difference of the position.

Novices' duels consist generally of fifteen rounds, the first being merely a formal salute. The fellows fight during fifteen minutes, unless one of them is severely wounded before the end of the time. An umpire has a stop watch in his hand, and

only the exact time of actual fencing is reckoned, which is rather a delicate and troublesome matter. Speaking is not allowed. If both combatants are good fencers and cautious it sometimes happens that neither is touched, but as many as thirty slight wounds are occasionally inflicted on both sides. A surgeon is always present and decides when a wound is too severe to allow of further fighting. This usually occurs when a large artery is cut, or a splinter raised upon a bone.

Meetings are generally arranged for novices, as soon as they have learned to handle the rapier, whether they have had any quarrel or not, and such encounters rarely lead to any result worth mentioning. The intention is to accustom the student to fighting for its own sake, and he must submit to the conditions or leave the Korps with ignominy. He learns to fence with coolness and judgment, in a way that could never be learned on the fencing ground with masks and blunted weapons, and he acquires from the first the habit of facing an armed

man with little but his own blade to protect him.

It must be remembered that duelling is a social institution in Germany. It is not necessary here to enter into a discussion of the merits of the system; it is enough to recall the late Emperor's speech in regard to it, in which he declared that he would punish any officer who fought a duel, but would dismiss from the army any one who refused to do so. The first clause of this apparent paradox restrains the practice from becoming an abuse or a general evil; the second imposes it as a necessity in serious cases. The penalty consists in a longer or shorter period of arrest, fixed within certain limits, and in case of the death of one of the combatants the survivor is confined in a fortress for three years, provided that the duel has taken place with the consent of the superior officers of the regiment sitting officially as a council of honour, and that the encounter has been conducted in accordance with the requirements of the law. Any informality is most severely visited.

The regimental council takes charge of the officer's reputation, and if it declares that there need be no meeting, honour is satisfied. In private life any individual may appeal to the decision of a court of honour chosen by himself and his adversary, and such decisions are considered final. But if any person refuses either to fight or to appeal to such arbitration, he is mercilessly excluded from all polite society wherever the facts are known.

The customs of the country being of this nature, the existence of fighting associations among students can be both explained and defended. That some other nations consider the practice of duelling as altogether barbarous and antiquated, has nothing to do with the case in hand. An individual cannot change the conditions of the society in which he is obliged to live, and must either conform to them or be excluded from intercourse with his fellows. To learn to fight is, in Germany, as necessary as learning to eat decently is in England, and the schools of fighting are the Korps and other Uni-

versity unions. As a direct consequence, they are also schools of life, and in some degree of etiquette. A man learns there exactly what sort of language is courteous, what words may be spoken without giving offence, and in what an insult really consists. By this means a vast amount of trouble is saved for society, and a uniform standard of behaviour is secured which is universally respected and adhered to by all who call themselves gentlemen. The council of the Korps represents the council of the regiment, or the social court of honour appealed to by civilians. The conversation of the members with each other, though familiar in the extreme, is regulated by rigid rules. The slightest approach to discourtesy between members of the same Korps must be followed by an instant apology, the refusal of which entails the immediate ejection of the offender with ignominy, and what is more, the announcement of the fact by circular letter within the month to every Korps student in every one of the numerous Universities of the empire. A dishonour-

able action of any kind is visited in the same way. The publicity of such a scandal is enormous. Seven or eight thousand young men are simultaneously informed that one of their number is disgraced, and at the end of the year all those older men who have been Korps students in their youth, are also informed of the fact. This amounts to warning some thirty or forty thousand gentlemen, chiefly in the higher ranks of society, against an individual, who, in one circumstance or another, is almost certain to be brought into contact with some of them. Such an institution cannot be laughed at, and its censure is no joke.

But even a Korps student's life is not made up merely of fighting and study. There is a very jovial side to it, and if its jollity is sometimes made the subject of reproach this is due to the fact that the few thoroughly lazy students are of necessity the very ones who are most seen. It cannot be denied that beer plays a considerable part in the life of German students. It is also an important element in the existence

of the nation. German beer, however, is not English ale, any more than it is to be confounded with the nauseous concoctions sold under its name in other countries. German beer is protected by law, and unoppressed by taxation. To adulterate it is a crime, an attempt to tax it would bring about a convulsion of the empire. Its use, in quantities that amaze the understanding, does not appear to have made Germans cowards in war, nor laggards in commerce ; still less does it seem to have stupefied the national intellect, or dulled the Teutonic keenness in the race of nations. The first military power in the world drinks as much beer as all the rest of the universe together, and probably a little more. The commercial nation that undersells Englishmen in England, Frenchmen in France, Italians in Italy and Turks in Turkey, consumes more malt liquor than they drink of all other liquors. The intellectual race that has produced Kant, Goethe, and Helmholtz, Bismarck, Moltke, Mommsen and Richard Wagner in a century, swallows Homeric draughts of

beer at breakfast, dinner and supper. That other nations do not follow their example, and laugh at their potations is of little consequence. Even if the Germans do not to some extent owe their national characteristics to their national drink, it cannot be asserted with any show of reason that beer has swamped their intelligence, damped their military ardour or drowned their commercial genius. Beer is the natural irrigator of conservative principles and intellectual progress. A little of it is good, much is better, and too much of it can never produce delirium tremens. Can more be said of any potable concoction manufactured by humanity for its daily use?

The Korps student drinks beer, therefore, and as though he felt a sort of religious reverence for the drink of his fathers, he has invented laws and rules for the ceremony, from which no departure is allowable. Every meeting of the Korps begins and ends with a 'Salamander.' At the president's word the glasses or stone jugs are moved rhythmically upon the oaken board.

Another word of command, and each student empties his beaker. Then the vessels are rattled on the table, while he slowly counts three, with the precision of a military drum, then struck sharply again three times, so that they touch the table all together, and the meeting is opened or closed, as the case may be. The same ceremony is performed when the health of any one is drunk by the whole Korps. The principle is that on peaceful occasions the drinking-cup takes the place of the rapier, and is used for saluting and for combat, as the sword is used in the duel. To give as much as is received is the object of both. As much as one student drinks to another's health, so much must the others drink in return. If two fall out in a discussion, the one may challenge the other to a beer duel. The weapons are full glasses, there is an umpire who gives the word, and he who empties his glass the first is the conqueror. The president can order any one to drink a certain quantity *pro pœnâ*, as a penalty for breaking a known rule, and the fellows

have the same privilege in regard to the novices.

There is another element, and a very important one, in the conduct of the jovial meetings. Singing is a traditional and indispensable business at every regular Kneipe. Every student has a standard song-book at his place, containing both the words and music. As singing at sight is taught in every common school throughout the country, the result is not so cacophonous as might be expected. The voices are young, fresh and manly, the tunes full of life and of an easy nature, the verses simple and often grand, for they are selected from the writings of celebrated poets. The spirit of the poetry is generally patriotic or fraternal, always essentially national. The whole effect is fine and elevating, and those who have sat as young men at the table of a numerous Korps do not easily forget the sensations evoked by the strains in which they have joined. Song holds a large place in German life, and an essentially good one. As a means of strengthening popular

patriotism no one has ever denied its efficacy, and as a mere pastime it is probably the most pacific and harmless that could be named. It may even be believed that the capacity and willingness among young men to amuse themselves with chorus singing indicates to some extent a national love of law and order. Italians are soloists, in music and in principles. Germans are born chorus singers, and their great men do not sing themselves, but conduct the singing of others.

The University of which Greif was a student, and which shall be called for convenience Schwarzburg, was one of the oldest in the country. The town in which it was situated possessed in a high degree the associations and the architectural features which throw a mediæval shadow over many northern cities, causing even the encroaching paint-brush of modern progress to move in old-fashioned lines of subdued colour. In northern lands antiquity is not associated with the presence of dirt, as it is in the south. Nüremberg does not look modern

because its streets are clean and there are no beggars, nor does the ancient seat of the Teutonic Knights at Marienburg look like a hotel because its lofty corridors and graceful halls, with their cross vaults springing from central columns, are carefully swept and free from dust. It would be interesting to examine the causes which produce this odd artistic phenomenon. In Italy the process of cleansing is destroying altogether the associations of antiquity and the artistic beauty which once charmed the traveller. Heidelberg, Nüremberg, and most places in Germany seem to have gained rather than lost in outward appearance by the advance of civilisation. Possibly, the Germans of to-day resemble their ancestors of the fourteenth century more closely than a modern Florentine resembles Lorenzo De' Medici. Possibly, in Germany such restorations as are necessary are executed with a keener perception of beauty in the model. Possibly, too, German conservatism, Gothic, thoughtful, stern, expresses itself in all it does; even as the Italian's queer love of change

and fetish worship of what, in other lands, was called progress thirty years ago, shows itself in all his visible works. Architecture exhibits a nation's feeling far more exactly than literature or any other branch of art or science. People may, or may not, read the books that fill the market, and nobody cares whether they do or not except the author and the publisher. But people must live in houses of some sort, and, if they are rich enough to choose, they will not live in houses they do not like, nor worship in temples of which the architecture irritates their nerves. Now architects are placed in the same position towards the house builders of the nation, in which authors stand towards the reading public. If people are conservative, and like old-fashioned buildings, the architect must satisfy his customer's love of tradition, just as the professional writer must write what is wanted, or starve. The difference in the result is that houses last some time whereas books do not.

Greif was deeply attached to the University town. He had spent many happy

hours within its walls, and had passed through many exciting moments of his young life amidst its high, narrow streets and ancient buildings. Such a place naturally exercised a greater influence over him than over most men of his age. Born and bred in the heart of the Black Forest, brought up in the house that had sheltered his race for centuries, he would have felt uneasy and out of his element if he had been all at once transported to a modern capital. But in Schwarzburg he felt that he was at home. The huge cathedral with its spires and arches and rich fretwork of dark stone, seemed to him the model of what all cathedrals should be. The swift river that ran between overhanging buildings, and beneath old bridges that were carved with armorial bearings and decorated with the rare ironwork of cunning smiths, famous long ago, bore in its breast the legends of his own forest home, and was impersonated in many a verse he had learned to sing with his comrades. The shady nooks and corners, the turns in the crooked

streets, the dark archways of old inns, the swinging signs with their rich deep colour and Gothic characters, the projecting balconies, glazed with round bull's eyes of blown glass set in heavy lead, the marvelously wrought weathercocks of iron and gold on the corners of the houses, every outward detail of the time-honoured and time-mellowed town spoke to his heart in accents he not only understood but loved. Even the modern note did not jar upon him. There were few officers in the streets, few soldiers in bright uniforms. Occasionally a troop of white cuirassiers rode slowly through the main thoroughfare, looking more like mediæval knights than Prussian soldiers. Their enormous stature, their bronzed faces, their snow-white dress and gleaming corslets, the stately, solemn tramp of their great horses, their straight broad blades without curve or bend erect at their sides, all made them utterly unlike the ordinary soldiery of present times, and rendered their appearance perfectly harmonious with their surroundings. Even

the students in their long boots and coloured caps did not look modern, as they strolled along in knots of three and four from the University to the mess at dinner-time, or thronged the pavements of the high street towards evening, when the purple light was on the cathedral spires and the shadows were deepening below.

Greif loved it all, and to some extent his affection was returned. He was certainly the most popular student who had ever trod the stones of Schwarzburg, as he was by nature one of the most thoroughly German. He had his quarrels, no doubt, but the way he settled them only served to increase his reputation. He was pointed out as the man of forty duels, who had never received a serious wound, and it was said to his credit that he never wantonly provoked any man, and that his victories had been chiefly gained over adversaries from neighbouring Universities. He was looked upon as the natural representative of Schwarzburg in all great affairs, and when he presided, in the turn of his Korps, over one of the periodical

festivities, his appearance was the occasion for a general ovation. The feeling that he was to be warmly welcomed was pleasant to Greif as he got out upon the platform and shook hands with a dozen who awaited him, but the remembrance that this was probably his last return as a student among his comrades gave him a passing sensation of sadness. He was approaching the end of a very happy period in his life, and though there was much happiness in the future, he was young enough to regret what he must leave so soon. Few men know what it is to be the central figure at a great University, and those who have been so fortunate know well enough how painful is the leavetaking and how hard the last good-bye to the scene of their triumphs. That moment had not yet come for Greif, but he could not help seeing how very near it was.

The students led him home to his lodgings over the river, and installed themselves as they could, all smoking and talking at once, while he opened his boxes and disposed some of his belongings in their places. They

told him all the news, with the vivacity of men who have twenty-four hours the start of a friend. The Rhine Korps had increased its numbers considerably and seemed already inclined to show its teeth to the Westphalia Korps. The Saxon Korps had lost one of their best fighters, who had suddenly gone to another University. Hardly any of the Prussian Korps had arrived, and it was doubtful whether they could renew the lease of their old drinking-hall. They themselves—their yellow caps showed that they were Swabians—were already on the look-out for new ‘foxes’ to enlist, and believed that they had secured a couple of excellent novices. The fencing-master of the Prussians had declared his intention of fighting a pitched battle—sabres and no bandages—with the fencing-master of the Rhiners. It was to be hoped that neither would be badly hurt, as they were both good teachers and worth their salaries. There was a new waiting-girl at the Stamm-Kneipe where they dined, and of course all the foxes would fall in love. They, the

fellows, would of course not think of such a thing. It would be quite beneath their dignity. As for the professors, all those who were not favourites grew older and older and duller and duller. One of the oldest and dumbest had been married in the summer to a girl of eighteen, a crying shame which ought to be visited by some demonstration. Why should a professor marry? Was not Heine right, and were not some kinds of professors cumberers of the earth, as Achilles called himself when Patroclus had been killed? Horrible creatures all those whom the Swabians disliked! The professor of Roman law looked more like a disappointed hyæna than ever, and as for his colleague, the professor of Greek philosophy, he had begun by looking like Socrates, when he was born, and time had done its work with its usual efficacy. Would not Greif be ready soon? It was supper-time.

Greif was thinking of the vanity of human sentiment. A few hours earlier he had been oppressed by one of the most

melancholy moods that had ever afflicted him. Now, as he stood still for a moment, looking through the open window at the stars as they began to shine out above the cathedral spire across the river, he felt as though ten years had passed since he had driven down through the forest. Only the image of Hilda remained, and seemed to drown in light the gloomy forebodings that had so much distressed him. As for Hilda's own warning, it had been nothing but the result of her sorrow at parting. And since parting there must be, he would enjoy to the full what was left of this happy student life, with its changing hours of study and feasting, of poetry, and fighting, and song that almost mingled with the clash of steel.

‘Are you ready?’ asked the students in chorus.

Greif set his yellow cap upon his close-cut golden hair.

‘Yes—come on! Vivat, floreat, crescat Suabia! The last semester shall be a merry one!’

And away they went, crowding down the narrow staircase, laughing, jesting and humming snatches of tunes as they burst out into the quiet shadowy street below.

CHAPTER VII

GREIF was not able to throw off the memories of his vacation so easily as he had at first imagined. The busy week that followed his return to Schwarzburg furnished enough excitement to divert his thoughts for a time into a more cheerful channel, and he was further reassured by the fact that his father's letter contained nothing that could alarm him. Everything was going on at Greifenstein as usual. Hilda and her mother had returned to Sigmundskron. The shooting was particularly good. A postscript informed Greif that nothing had been heard from a certain person, who was not named. The young man thought his father's handwriting was growing larger and more angular than ever, and that instead of

becoming less steady with advancing years, the letters looked as though they were cut into the paper with the point of a sharp knife.

Some days passed quickly by, and he began to think that he had disturbed himself foolishly, and had suffered his judgment to be unbalanced by the impulsive speeches of Hilda and of his own mother. Then, all at once, as he sat one morning at his accustomed place in one of the lecture-rooms, noting in a blank book the wisdom that fell from the lips of a shrivelled professor, his thoughts wandered and the vision of Hilda rose before his eyes, with the expression she had worn when she had spoken of that terrible catastrophe which was in store for him. He could not imagine why he should have thought of the matter so suddenly, nor why it seemed so much more important than before. It required a strong effort to concentrate his mind once more upon what he was doing, and when he succeeded, he was aware that the point of the professor's argument had escaped him. Mechanically

he looked at his neighbour to see whether he had been making notes. The latter was a man much older than himself, and was writing busily upon loose sheets. He did not look up, but he seemed to understand what Greif wanted, for he handed him, or tossed him, the piece of paper on which he was scribbling, numbered the blank page beneath it, and went on quickly without even turning his eyes. Greif thanked him, and in the next pause of the lecture copied the notes into his own book. At the end of the hour Greif returned the sheet and repeated his thanks. He did not know the man, even by sight, a fact which surprised him, as the stranger was rather a striking personage.

‘I am very much obliged,’ he said. ‘I was absent-minded—thinking of something else.’

‘That is always rash,’ replied the other. ‘I am very glad to have been of service to you.’

Although Greif was not fond of making acquaintances among students who wore no

colours, he could not refrain from continuing the conversation. The two were the last to leave the hall and went down the broad staircase together.

‘You have not been long in the University,’ he observed.

‘I have only just arrived. I have migrated from Heidelberg. Permit me to introduce myself,’ he added according to German custom. ‘My name is Rex.’

‘My name is von Greifenstein. Most happy.’

‘Most happy.’

Both bowed, stopping for the purpose upon the landing, and then looking into each other’s eyes. Rex was a man of rather more than medium height, thin, but broad-shouldered and gracefully built. He might have been of any age, but he looked as though he were about thirty years old. It would not have surprised any one to hear that he was much older, or much younger. Thick brown hair was carefully brushed and smoothed all over his head, and he wore his beard, which was of the same colour, carefully

trimmed, full and square. A soft and clear complexion, a little less than fair but very far from dark, showed at first sight that Rex rejoiced in perfect health. The straight nose was very classic in outline, the brow and forehead evenly developed, the modelling about the eyes and temples very smooth and delicate. But the eyes themselves destroyed at once the harmony of the whole face and gave it a very uncommon expression. This was due entirely to their colour and not at all to their shape. The iris was very large, so that little of the surrounding white was visible, and its hue was that of the palest blue china, while the pupil was so extremely small as to be scarcely noticeable. The apparent absence of that shining black aperture in the centre, made the eyes look like glass marbles, and rendered their glance indescribably stony. Greif almost started when he saw them.

‘You preferred Schwarzburg to Heidelberg, then,’ he remarked, by way of continuing the conversation.

‘For my especial branch I think it is superior.’

‘Philosophy?’ asked Greif, thinking of the lecture they had just attended.

‘No. That is a pastime with me. I am interested in astronomy and in some branches connected with that science. You have a celebrated specialist here.’

‘Yes, old Uncle Sternkitzler,’ answered Greif irreverently.

‘Exactly,’ assented Rex. ‘He is a shining light, a star of the first magnitude. If there is anything to discover, he will discover it. If not, he will explain the reason why there is nothing. He is a great man. He knows what nothing is, for there is nothing he does not know. I am delighted with him. You do not care for astronomy, Herr von Greifenstein?’

‘I do not know anything about it, and I have no talent for mathematics,’ answered Greif. ‘You intend to make it a profession, I presume.’

‘Yes, as far as it can be called a profession.’

‘How far is that, if I may ask?’

‘Just as far as it goes after it ceases to be an amusement,’ answered Rex.

‘That may be very far,’ said Greif who was struck by the definition.

‘Yes. If you call it a profession, it is one for which a lifetime of study is only an insignificant preparation. If you call it a study and not a profession, you make of it a mere amusement, like philosophy.’

‘I do not find that very amusing,’ said Greif, with a laugh.

‘Nothing is amusing when you are obliged to do it,’ answered the other. ‘Duty is the hair shirt of the nineteenth century. A man who does his duty is just as uncomfortable while he is doing it as any Trappist who ever buckled on a spiked belt under his gown.’

‘But afterwards?’

‘Afterwards? What is afterwards? It is nothing to you or me. Afterwards means the time when you and I are buried, and the next generation are writhing in hair shirts of their own making, and prickly girdles

which they put on themselves.' Rex laughed oddly.

'I differ from you,' answered Greif.

'You are a Korps student, sir. Does that mean that you wish to quarrel with me?'

'Not unless you choose. I am not in search of a row this morning. I differed from you as to your view of duty. It seems to me contrary to German ideas.'

'Facts are generally contrary to all ideas,' answered Rex.

'Not in Germany—at least so far as duty is concerned. Besides, if science is true, facts must agree with it. Political ethics are a science, and duty is necessary to the system that science has created. What would become of our military supremacy if the belief in duty were suddenly destroyed?'

'I do not know. But I know that it will not make the smallest difference to us, what becomes of it, when we are dead and buried.'

'It would change the condition of our children for the worse.'

'You need not marry. No one obliges

you or me to become the fathers of new specimens of our species.'

'And what becomes of love in your system?' inquired Greif, more and more surprised at his acquaintance's extraordinary conversation.

'What becomes of anything when it has ceased to exist?' asked Rex.

'I do not know.'

'There is nothing to know in the case. The motion—you would call it force—the motion continues, but the particular thing in which it was manifested is no longer, and that particular thing never will exist again. Motion is imperishable, because it is immaterial. The innumerable milliards of vortices in which the material of your body moves at such an amazing rate will not stand still when you are dead, nor even when every visible atom of your body has vanished from sight in the course of ages. Every vortex is imperishable, eternal, of infinite duration. The vortex was the cause before the beginning and it will remain itself after the end of all things.'

‘The prime cause,’ mused Greif. ‘And who made the vortex?’

‘God,’ answered Rex laconically.

‘But then,’ objected the younger student in some surprise, ‘you believe in a future life, in the importance of this life, in duty, in all the rest of it.’

‘I believe in the vortex,’ replied the other, ‘in its unity, individuality and eternity. Life is a matter of convenience, its importance is a question of opinion, its duties are ultimately considerations of taste. What are opinions, conveniences and tastes, compared with realities? The vortex is a fact, and it seems to me that it furnishes enough material for reflexion to satisfy a mind of ordinary activity.’

‘You hold strange views,’ said Greif thoughtfully.

‘Oh no!’ exclaimed Rex, with sudden animation. ‘I am not at all different from any other peaceful student of astronomy, I can assure you. Neither the vortex nor any other fact ever prevents any man from doing what is individually agreeable to him,

nor from enjoying everything that comes in his way, or calling it sinful, according to his convictions.'

'And are you a happy man, if the question is not indiscreet?'

'Ah, that is your favourite question among philosophers,' laughed Rex, 'and it shows what you really think of all your beliefs about duty and the rest of the virtues. You really care for nothing but happiness, if the truth be told. All your religions, your moralities, your laws, your customs, you regard as a means of obtaining ultimate enjoyment. There is little merit in being happy with so much artificial assistance. Real originality should show itself in surpassing your felicity without making use of your laborious methods in attaining to it. The trouble is that your political ethics, your recipes for making bliss in wholesale quantities, take no account of exceptional people. But why should we discuss the matter? What is happiness? Millions of volumes have been written about it, and no man has ever had the courage to own exactly

what he believes would make him happy. You may add your name to the list, Herr von Greifenstein, if you please, and write the next ponderous work upon the subject. You would not be any happier afterwards and you would be very much older. If you really desire to be happy, I will tell you how it is possible. In the first place, are you happy now?’

Rex fixed his stony stare, that contrasted so strangely with his beautiful face, upon Greif’s eyes. He saw there an uncertainty, a vague uneasiness, that answered his question well enough.

‘Yes,’ answered the younger man in a doubtful tone, ‘I suppose I am.’

‘I think your happiness is not complete,’ said Rex, turning away. ‘Perhaps my simple plan may help you. Interrogate yourself. What is it that you want? Find out what that something is—that is all.’

‘And then?’

‘And then? Why, take it, and be happy,’ answered Rex with a careless

smile, as though the rule were simple enough.

‘That is soon said,’ replied Greif in a grave tone. ‘I want what no man can give me.’

‘Nor woman either?’

‘Nor woman either.’

‘And something you could not take if it were before you, within reach?’

‘No. I want nothing material. I want to know the future.’

‘Surely that is not a very hard thing,’ answered Rex, looking at his watch.

‘It must be dinner-time,’ said Greif politely, as he noticed the action. He had no wish to detain his new acquaintance.

‘Indeed, it is just noon. I fear I have kept you from some engagement.’

‘I assure you, it has given me the greatest pleasure to meet you,’ answered Greif, holding out his hand.

‘The pleasure has been quite upon my side,’ returned Rex, bowing with alacrity.

And so they parted, Rex plunging into a shady side street, while Greif continued his

walk towards the dining-place of his Korps, thinking as he went, of the queer person he had just seen for the first time. His name was strange, his conversation was unusual, his eyes were most disagreeable, and yet oddly fascinating. Greif thought about him and was not satisfied with his short interview. The man's remark about the future was either that of a visionary, or of an absent-minded person who did not always know what he was saying. Greif himself could hardly understand how he had been led, in a first meeting with one who was altogether a stranger, to speak so plainly of what disturbed him. It was not his custom to make acquaintances at a venture, or to refer to his own affairs with people he did not know. He reflected, however, that he had not committed himself in any way, while admitting that he might easily have been drawn on to do so if the interview had been prolonged.

At dinner he asked his friends whether any of them knew a student whose name was Rex. No one had heard of him, and

on learning that he was a man older than the average, they murmured, and said one to another that Greif was beginning to cross the borders of Philistia. After the meal was over, Greif went to his lodgings and tried to work. The sudden anxiety that had seized him in the morning during the lecture grew stronger in solitude, until it was almost unbearable. He pushed aside his books and wrote to his father, inquiring whether anything had happened, in a way which would certainly have surprised old Greifenstein if he himself had been less nervous about the future than he actually was. It was a relief to have written, and Greif returned to his labours more quietly afterwards.

He did not see Rex again in the lecture-room, though his eye wandered along the rows of heads bent down over busy hands that wrote without ceasing. Rex was not among them. He had said that he considered philosophy an amusement, and he probably came to the hall where it was taught when the fancy seized him to divert

himself. But the desire to talk with him again became stronger, until Greif actually determined to go in search of the man.

The sun had gone down, and he stood at his open window as he had done on the evening of his arrival, watching almost unconsciously for the first stars to shine out above the cathedral spire. The air was very quiet, disturbed by no sound but the swirl of the deep river against the stone piers of the bridge far down below the student's window. There was something melancholy in the ceaseless rush of the strong water, which reminded him of the sighing of the trees at home, on that last morning when he had sat with Hilda at the foot of the Hunger-Thurm. At such a time anything which recalled the circumstances of the vacation necessarily brought with it an increase in his anxiety. Greif thought of the evening that was before him if he joined his comrades at their usual place of meeting, and the prospect was distasteful. He would be glad to escape from the lights and the noise and the drinking and singing,

even from his position of importance among his fellows, who made him their oracle upon all University matters. He would prefer to pass an hour or two in quiet conversation, in a quiet room, with Rex the student of astronomy and mathematics. He did not know where he lived, nor whether he would be at home at that hour, but it was easy to satisfy his curiosity upon both points.

He found the address he wanted at the Beadle's office. Rex lived in a dark street near the cathedral. Greif climbed many flights of steps, finding his way by striking one match after another. At the top there was but one door. He knocked twice and waited. There was no answer, and he knocked again. He was sure that he could hear some one moving inside the apartment, but the door remained closed. Annoyed at being kept waiting he pounded loudly with the piece of iron and called on Rex by name. He was rewarded at last by hearing footsteps within.

‘Who are you?’ asked an angry voice.

‘And why are you making such a hideous noise?’

‘My name is von Greifenstein,’ replied Greif, ‘and I want to see Herr Rex.’

He was preparing for a disagreeable encounter with some unknown person, when the door opened quickly and he found himself face to face with Rex himself. His expression was bland in the extreme as he held up the light he carried and greeted his guest.

‘I beg your pardon,’ he said in tones very unlike those Greif had just heard. ‘I had no idea that it was you. Pray come in.’

‘I am afraid I am disturbing you,’ answered Greif, hesitating as though he had forgotten the tremendous energy he had put into his knocking.

‘Not at all, not at all,’ repeated Rex, carefully fastening the door when Greif had entered. ‘You see I am a newcomer and have no friends here,’ he continued apologetically, ‘and I did not imagine that you knew my address.’

After passing through a narrow passage, Greif found himself in a large room with three windows. It was evident that Herr Rex lived more luxuriously than most students, for there was no bed in the place, and an open door showed that there was at least one other apartment beyond. A couple of bookcases were well filled with volumes, and there was a great heap of others upon the floor in the corner. Two large easy-chairs stood on opposite sides of the porcelain stove, which at that season was of course not in use. A broad table in the centre was covered with books, many of them new, and papers covered with notes or figures were strewn amongst them in the greatest disorder. Near one of the windows Greif noticed a writing-desk, upon which lay a few drawing and writing materials and a large sheet of paper. It was clear that Rex had been at work here, for a bright lamp stood upon the desk and its strong light fell from beneath the green shade upon the mathematical figure that had absorbed the student's attention.

‘It is a very quiet lodging,’ remarked Rex, drawing forward one of the arm-chairs and then seating himself in the other. ‘It is just what I wanted. I do not like noise when I am reading.’

Greif did not exactly know what to say. To visit a student in his rooms when he had only met him once, was a new experience, and Rex’s stony blue eyes seemed to ask the object of his coming. It was evident that Rex only spoke of his habitation in order to break a silence which might have been awkward.

‘The fact is,’ said Greif, as though answering a direct question, ‘I have been thinking of what you said the other day.’

‘You do my remarks an honour which I believe they have never received before,’ replied Rex, bending his handsome head and smiling in his brown beard.

‘Do you remember? I said that I needed only one thing to make me happy. I wanted to know the future. You answered that it must be easy to get my wish. Were you in earnest, or did you speak thought-

lessly? That is what I came to ask you.'

'Indeed?' Rex laughed. 'You said to yourself that your acquaintance was either a fool or an absent-minded person, did you not?'

'Well——' Greif hesitated and smiled. 'Either visionary or absent-minded,' he admitted. 'Yes, I could not explain your remark in any other way.'

'Of course you could not, unless you suspected that I might be a charlatan.'

'That did not occur to me——'

'It might have occurred to you, considering what I had said. It might occur to you now, if I answered your question. But on the other hand it is of no importance whether it does or not. My reply will contribute to your peace of mind by helping you to catalogue a man you do not know among the fools and charlatans of whom you have heard. Would you like to know the future? I can tell it to you, if you please.'

'The vortex, I suppose,' answered Greif rather scornfully.

‘Yes. I can tell you the direction of the vortices of which you are composed, for a time, while they are on their way to join other vortices in the dance of death. The vortices do nothing but dance, spin and whirl for ever through life the farce; through death, the tragedy; and through all the eternity of the epilogue. What do you wish to know?’

‘You are jesting!’ exclaimed Greif moodily. ‘I wish you would be in earnest.’

‘In earnest!’ cried Rex contemptuously. ‘What is earnestness?’

He rose and went to the desk upon which the lamp was burning, opened it and took a fresh sheet of paper from within. Greif watched him with considerable indifference. He had not found what he had sought and he already meditated a retreat. Rex paid no attention to him, but rapidly described a circle upon the paper and divided it into twelve parts with a ruler.

‘Do you remember the date of the day we met?’ he asked, looking up.

‘It was a Monday,’ replied Greif, wondering what his companion was doing.

‘That will do. I have a calendar,’ said Rex.

He consulted an almanac which he drew from his pocket, made a few short calculations, and jotted down certain signs and figures in various parts of the divided circle. When he had finished he looked attentively at what he had done. The whole operation had occupied about a quarter of an hour.

‘I do not wonder that you are anxious,’ he remarked, as he resumed his seat in the easy-chair, still holding the sheet of paper in his hand.

‘What have you discovered?’ inquired Greif, with an incredulous smile.

‘You are threatened by a great calamity, you and all who belong to you,’ replied Rex. ‘I suppose you know it, and that is the reason why you want to know the future.’

Greif’s cheek turned slowly pale, not at the announcement, but at the thought that

this chance student perhaps knew of Riese-neck's existence, and of all that his return might involve.

'Herr Rex,' he said sternly, 'be good enough to tell me what you know of me and my family from other sources than that bit of paper.'

'Not much,' answered the other with a dry laugh. 'I barely knew of your existence until I met you the other day, and I have not mentioned you nor heard your name spoken since.'

'Why then, you can know nothing, and your figures cannot tell you,' said Greif, not yet certain whether to feel relief at the protestation of ignorance, or to doubt its veracity.

'Shall I tell you what I see here?'

'Tell me the nature of the calamity.'

'Its nature, or the cause of it?' inquired Rex, scrutinising the sheet of paper.

'I suppose that they must be closely connected. Let me know the cause first—it will be the surest test.'

Rex laid the paper upon his knee, and

folded his hands, looking his guest in the face.

‘Herr von Greifenstein, this is a very serious matter,’ he said. ‘If I tell you what I have just discovered, you will certainly believe that I knew it all before, and that I am acting a comedy. You must either bind yourself to put faith in my innocence, or we must drop this affair and talk of something else.’

Greif was silent for some moments. To refuse was to insult a man of whom he had gratuitously asked a question. To promise with the intention of keeping his word was impossible. He found himself in an awkward dilemma. Rex helped him out of it with his usual skill.

‘I will tell you what is passing in your mind, and why you are silent,’ he said. ‘You feel that you cannot believe me. I do not blame you. You will not give your word in such a case, because you must break it. You are quite right. You are full of curiosity to learn how much I know about you. It is very natural. The wisest

thing to be done, is to sacrifice your curiosity and I will tear up this piece of paper.'

'No—wait a moment!' cried Greif anxiously, putting out his hand to prevent the act.

'I do not see any other way out of the difficulty,' observed Rex, leaning back in his chair and looking at the stove. 'You may do this, however. You may think what you please of me, provided you do not express your disbelief. I am the most pacific of men, and I have a strong dislike to fighting at my age. Moreover, you asked me the question which led to all this. Even if I answer it, am I bound to explain the reasons for my reply? I believe the code of honour does not require that, and if there is nothing offensive to you in my predictions, I do not see why we need quarrel after all, nor what it matters how I obtained my information. I will promise, too, not to impart it to any one else. Of course, the simplest way of ending the matter would be to say no more about it.'

Somehow Rex's words seemed to change the position. Greif was inwardly conscious that he would not leave the house without discovering how much his companion knew, and if this submission to his own curiosity was little flattering to his pride, it was at least certain that he could obtain what he wanted without derogating from his dignity if he would follow the advice Rex gave him.

'The compact is to be this, I understand,' he answered at length. 'You will tell me what you know, and I will express no opinion as to the way in which you arrived at the information. Is that what you desire?'

'It is what I suggest,' answered Rex. 'And I bind myself voluntarily to silence.'

'Very good. Will you continue your predictions? Will you tell me the cause of the danger?'

'You and your family are threatened with great misfortune through the return of an evil person—a relation, I should fancy—who has been absent many years.'

Greif started at the directness of the assertion, and an exclamation of something like anger rose to his lips. But he remembered the compact he had just made.

‘Will he return?’ he asked in a voice which showed Rex that he was not mistaken.

‘Inevitably,’ answered the latter. ‘Therein consists the peculiarity of your situation. You are at the mercy of the inevitable. You cannot retard by one day the catastrophe, any more than you can prevent one of the planets from returning to a given point in its orbit. He will return—let me see——’

‘Can you tell me when?’ asked Greif, who for a moment had forgotten his scepticism.

Rex seemed to be making a calculation, and repeating it more than once in order to be sure of its accuracy.

‘In three months, more or less. Probably before Christmas. He is now at a great distance, in the south-west——’

‘It is impossible that you should guess

so much !' exclaimed Greif, rising in great excitement.

'You were not to express an opinion, I believe,' observed Rex, looking coldly at the younger man.

'Can you describe him ?' asked Greif, almost fiercely.

'Oh yes,' replied the other. 'He is elderly, almost old. Perhaps sixty years of age. He is violent, unreliable, generally unfortunate, probably disgraced. That is no doubt the reason why you dread his return——'

'Look here, Herr Rex !' cried Greif, interrupting him violently. 'I do not care a straw for our compact, as you call it——'

'You agreed to it. I did not desire to speak further in the matter.'

'Will you agree to forget that there was any compact ?' asked Greif desperately.

'Oh no, certainly not,' answered his tormentor. 'And you will not forget it either. You are a man of your word, Herr von Greifenstein. All I can do is

to hold my tongue and tell you nothing more.'

'That need not prevent my quarrelling with you about something else——'

'No, if you find it possible. It is not easy to quarrel with me.'

'But if I were to insult you——'

'You will not do so,' returned Rex very calmly and gravely. 'You are bound not to attack me about my predictions, and so far as any other cause of disagreement is concerned, I think you will find it hard to discover one, for you came here to make a friendly visit, without a thought of quarrelling. I think you must see that.'

Greif walked up and down the room in silence for some minutes. He felt the superiority of Rex's position, and would not stoop to force the situation by any brutal discourtesy. At the same time he was distracted by the idea that Rex had not yet told him half of what he knew.

'You are right,' he said at last. 'I am a fool!'

'No, you are an agglomeration of vortices,'

answered Rex with a smile. 'Shall I tell you one fact more, one very curious fact?'

'Tell me all!' answered Greif with sudden energy.

'In the nature of things, you should have news of that person to-day. You have not heard from him before coming here?'

'No, and I think nothing could be more improbable than that I should have news of him at all, beyond what you tell me. Besides, I could prevent the possibility of such a thing.'

'How?' inquired Rex.

'By trespassing upon your hospitality until midnight,' answered Greif with a laugh, in which his natural good temper reappeared once more.

'Will you do so?' asked the student with the greatest readiness. 'Here is a test of my veracity. Whether you stay here, or go home, or wander out alone by the river, you will hear of that individual before midnight.'

'But nobody knows I am here.'

'The stars know,' answered Rex with a smile. 'Will you stay with me, or will you

go home? It makes no difference, excepting that by staying you will give me the advantage of your company——'

'What is that?' asked Greif. There was a loud knocking at the outer door.

'Probably news from your uncle,' answered Rex imperturbably. 'Will you open the door? There can be no deception then.'

'Yes. I will open the door.'

A telegraph-messenger was outside, and inquired if Herr von Greifenstein were in the lodging.

'How did you know where I was?' asked Greif.

'It was marked urgent and so I inquired at the Poodle's office,' answered the fellow with a grin as he signified the official by the students' slang appellation.

Greif hastened to the inner room and tore open the envelope, his face pale with excitement.

'My father telegraphs—"Your uncle has written his intention to return at once——" Good Heavens!'

He tossed the bit of paper to Rex and

fell back in his chair overcome by something very like fear.

Rex glanced at the despatch and then returned to the study of his figure without betraying any surprise.

CHAPTER VIII

GREIF's first sensation was that of astonishment, almost amounting to stupefaction. Rex could have desired no more striking fulfilment of a prediction than chance had vouchsafed to him in the present instance. For he admitted to himself that fortune had favoured him, even though the arrival of the news within twenty-four hours was not in his belief a mere coincidence. The telegram might have come at any other moment and might have found Greif in any other place. As for Greif, he saw at a glance how impossible it was that Rex should have foreseen the incident, or planned the circumstances in which it occurred. He could not have known that Greif was coming that evening, unless he knew everything, and

moreover the despatch was fresh from the office, and twenty minutes had not elapsed between the time of its reception over the wires and of its delivery into Greif's hands.

If the occurrence was strange, its effect upon the young man was at least equally unforeseen. Greif had always despised persons who professed to dabble in the supernatural, and had laughed to scorn all the so-called manifestations of spiritualism, mesmerism, and super-rational force. When he had heard that the great astronomer Zöllner had written a book to explain the performances of Slade, the medium, by means of a mathematical theory of a fourth dimension in space, Greif had believed that the scientist was raving mad. Up to the moment when the telegram had arrived, he had been convinced that Rex was a cheat, who had accidentally learned certain facts connected with the Greifensteins and was attempting to play the magician by making an adroit use of what he knew. When brought suddenly face to face with a phenomenon he could not explain, Greif's

reason ceased altogether to perform its functions. The news he had just received was startling, but the bewilderment caused by its arrival at that precise juncture made even Rieseneck's return seem insignificant, in comparison with Rex's power to foretell the announcement of it.

'I do not understand,' said Greif, staring at his companion.

'Nor I, beyond a certain point,' replied the elder man, looking up from his paper.

'How could you know?'

'I did not, until a few minutes before I told you. Of course you thought I did. It is very natural.'

'It could hardly have been a coincidence,' said Greif, almost to himself.

'Hardly.' Rex smiled.

'And yet,' continued Greif, 'I do not see any way of explaining it all.'

'I could show you, but it would need several years to do so.'

'It is not a personal gift?'

'No, it is a science.'

'Of what kind?'

‘It is that part of astronomy in which the public does not believe. Do you understand?’

‘Astrology?’ inquired Greif with a rather foolish and yet incredulous smile. ‘I thought that was considered to be nothing but mediæval ignorance.’

‘It is considered so. Whether it is really nothing better than a superstition you have had an opportunity of judging.’

‘But how can you reconcile it with serious science?’

‘The vortex reconciles everything—even men who are on the point of quarrelling, when the circumstances are favourable.’

‘But if all this is true, there is no reason why you should not know everything——’

‘Not everything. There are cases when it is clear from the first that a question cannot be answered. With better tools, a man might do much more. But one may foretell much, if one will take the trouble. Will you hear more of what I have discovered about you?’

Greif hesitated. His strongly rational

bent of mind suggested to him that after all there might be some trickery in the prediction so lately fulfilled, though he was unable to detect it. But if Rex foretold the future Greif felt that he must be influenced, and perhaps made very unhappy by the prophecy, which might in the end prove utterly false. It would be more prudent, he thought, to wait and lay a trap for the pretended astrologer, by asking him at another time to answer a different question, of which it should be certain that he had no previous knowledge. The conclusion was quite in accordance with Greif's prudent nature, which instinctively distrusted the evidence of its senses beyond a certain point, and desired to prepare its experiments with true German scepticism, leaving nothing to chance and fortifying the conclusion by the purification of the means.

‘Thank you,’ he said at last. ‘I will not hear any more at present.’

‘Which means that you will ask me an unforeseen question one of these days to test my strength,’ observed Rex with a smile.

Greif laughed rather nervously, for the remark expressed exactly what was passing in his mind.

‘I confess, I meant to do so. How did you know what I was thinking?’

‘By experience. Are not the nine-tenths of every human being precisely like the nine-tenths of the next? The difficulties of life are connected with that tenth which is not alike in any two.’

‘Your experience must have been very great.’

‘It has been just great enough to teach me to recognise the point at which no experience is of any use whatever.’

‘And what is that point?’

‘Generally the sweetest in life, and the most dangerous.’

‘You speak in riddles, Herr Rex.’

‘One man’s life is another man’s riddle, and if he succeeds in guessing its solution he cries out that it is a sham and was not worth guessing at all.’

‘I believe you are a man-hater,’ said Greif.

‘Why should I be? The world gives me all I ask of it, and if that is not much the fault lies in my scanty imagination. The world is a flower-garden. If you like the flowers, pluck them. Happiness consists in knowing what we want, or in imagining that we want something. To take it is an easy matter.’

‘Then everybody ought to be happy.’

‘Everybody might be—if everybody would take the consequences. That is the stumbling-block—the lack of an ounce of determination and a drachm of courage.’

‘Paradoxes!’ exclaimed Greif. ‘Life is a more serious matter——’

‘Than death? Certainly.’ Rex laughed.

‘I did not say that,’ returned Greif gravely. ‘Death is the most serious of all earthly matters. No one can laugh at it.’

‘Then I am alone in the world. I laugh at it. Serious? Why, it is the affair of a moment compared with a lifetime of enjoyment!’

‘And what may come afterwards does not disturb you?’

‘Why should it? Is there any sense in being made miserable by the concoctions of other people’s hysterical imagination?’

Greif was silent. He was young enough and simple enough to be shocked by Rex’s indifference and unbelief, and yet the man exercised an influence over him which he felt and did not resent. Phrases which would have sounded shallow in the mouth of a Korps student, discussing the immortality of the soul over his twentieth measure of beer, produced a very different impression when they fell from the lips of the sober astronomer with the strange eyes. Greif felt uncomfortable, and yet he knew that he would certainly seek the society of Rex again at no distant date. At present all his ideas were unsettled, and after a moment’s silence he rose to go.

‘Do not forget your telegram,’ said Rex, handing it to him.

‘Will you go to the philosophy lecture to-morrow?’ asked Greif as he reached the door.

‘Perhaps.’

Rex insisted on showing his guest down the stairs to the outer door, a civility which was almost necessary, considering the darkness of the descent. As Greif went down the narrow street, Rex stood on the threshold, shading the light with his hand and listening to the decreasing echo of the footsteps in the distance. Then he re-entered the house and climbed to his lodging.

‘So much for astrology!’ he exclaimed, as he sat down opposite the empty chair which Greif had lately occupied. For a long time he did not move, but remained in his place, with half-closed eyes, apparently ruminating upon the past conversation. When he rose at last, he had reached the conclusion that his coming to Schwarzburg was a step upon which he might congratulate himself.

From that day his acquaintance with Greif gradually ripened into an intimacy. Its growth was almost imperceptible at first, but before a month had passed, the two met every day. Greif’s companions murmured. It was a sad sight in their

eyes, and they could not be reconciled to it. But Greif explained that he was thinking seriously of his final degree, and that he must be excused for frequenting the society of a much older man, after having given the Korps the best years of his University life. He even offered to resign his position as first in charge, but the proposition raised a storm of protests and he continued to wear the yellow cap as before.

He wrote to his father frequently, but after the first confirmation of the telegram he got no further news of Rieseneck. He described Rex, and spoke of his growing friendship with the remarkable student, who seemed to know everything, and old Greifenstein was glad to learn that his son's mind was taking a serious direction. He wrote to his mother more than once, in terms more affectionate than he had formerly used, but her answers were short and unsatisfactory, and never evoked in his heart that thrill of pity and love which had so much surprised him in himself during the last weeks at home. He wrote to Hilda,

but her letters in reply had a sadness in them that made him almost fear to break the seal. It was at such moments that the anxiety for the future came upon him with redoubled force, until he began to believe that the person most directly threatened by that fatal catastrophe which had been foretold must be Hilda herself. He thought more than once of putting the question to Rex directly, to be decided by his mysterious art. It would have been a relief to him if the decision had chanced to be contrary to his own vague forebodings, but on the other hand, it seemed like a profanation of his love to explain the situation to his friend. He never spoke of Hilda, and Rex did not know of her existence.

And yet Rex was constantly at his side, a part of his life, an element in his plans, a contributor to all his thoughts. He would not have admitted that he was under the man's influence, and the student of astronomy would never have claimed any such superiority. It was nevertheless a fact that Greif asked his friend's advice almost daily,

and profited greatly thereby, as well as by the inexhaustible fund of information which the mathematician placed at his disposal. Nevertheless Greif did not lay the trap by which he had intended to test Rex's science, or expose his charlatanism, as the result should determine. He could not make up his mind to try the experiment, for he liked Rex more and more, and began to dread lest anything should occur to cause a breach in their friendship.

It chanced that on a certain evening of November Greif and Rex were sitting at a small marble table in the corner of the principal restaurant. They often came to this place to dine, because it was not frequented by the students, and they were more free from interruption than in one of the ordinary beer saloons of the town. They had finished their meal and, the cloth having been removed, were discussing what remained of a bottle of Makgräfler wine. Greif was smoking and Rex, as he talked, made sketches of his companion's head upon the marble table.

A student entered the hall, looked about at its occupants, and presently installed himself in a seat near the two friends, touching his blue cap as he sat down. The pair returned the salutation and continued their conversation. The student was of the Rhine Korps, a tall, saturnine youth, evidently strong and active, but very sallow and lean. Greif knew him by sight. His name was Bauer, and he had of late gained a considerable reputation as a fighter. Rex glanced curiously at him once, and then, as though one look had been enough to fix his mental photograph, did not turn his eyes towards him again. Bauer ordered a measure of beer, lighted a black cigar and leaned back against the wall, gloomily eyeing the people at more distant tables. He looked like a man in a singularly bad humour, to whom any piece of mischief would be a welcome diversion. Rex abandoned his sketch of Greif's head, looked surreptitiously at his watch and then began to draw circles and figures instead. Presently he slipped his hand into his pocket and drew out the

almanac he always carried about with him.

‘What are you doing?’ asked Greif, interrupting himself in the midst of what he had been saying.

‘Nothing particular,’ answered Rex. ‘Go on. I am listening.’

‘I was saying,’ continued Greif, ‘that I preferred my own part of the country, though you may call it less civilised if you please.’

‘It is natural,’ assented Rex, without looking up from his figure. ‘Every man prefers the place where he is born, I suppose, provided his associations with it are agreeable.’ Then he unconsciously spoke a few words to himself, unnoticed by Greif, ‘Saturn in his fall and term—cadent—peregrine.’

‘It is not only that,’ said Greif. ‘Look at the Rhine, how flat and dull and ugly it grows——’

He was suddenly interrupted by the close presence of the other student, who had risen and stood over him, touching his cap and bowing stiffly.

‘Excuse me,’ he said in a harsh voice, ‘my name is Bauer—from Cologne—I must beg you not to insult the Rhine in a public place, nor in my hearing.’

Greif rose to his feet at once, very much astonished that any one should wish to quarrel with him upon such a pretence. Before he could answer, however, Rex anticipated him by addressing the student in a tone that rang through the broad room.

‘Hold your tongue, you silly boy!’ he said, and for the first time since they had become friends Greif recognised the angry accents he had heard through the door when he had first gone to Rex’s lodging.

‘Prosit!’ growled Bauer. ‘Who are you, if you please?’

‘My name is Rex. My friends the Swabians will manage this affair.’

‘I also desire to cross swords with you,’ said Greifenstein politely, using a stock phrase.

‘Prosit!’ growled Bauer again. He took the card Rex offered him, and then, with a

scarcely perceptible salute, turned on his heel and walked away.

Greif remained standing during some seconds, gazing after the departing student. His face expressed his annoyance at the quarrel, and a shade of anger darkened its usual radiance.

‘Sit down,’ suggested Rex quietly.

‘We must be off at once,’ said Greif, mechanically resuming his seat. ‘There is to be fighting to-morrow morning, a dozen duels or more, and I will settle with that fellow before breakfast.’

‘That is to say, I will,’ observed the other, putting his pencil and his almanac into his pocket.

‘You?’ exclaimed Greif in surprise.

‘Why not? I can demand it. I insulted him roundly, before you challenged him.’

‘Do you mean to say that you, Rex, a sober old student of Heaven knows how many semesters, want to go out and drum with *schlägers* like one of us?’

‘Yes, I do. And I request you as the

head of your Korps to arrange the matter for to-morrow morning.'

'You insist? How long is it since you have fenced? I should be sorry for that brown beard of yours, if a deep-carte necessitated shaving half of it.' Greif laughed merrily at the idea, and Rex smiled.

'Yes, my friend, I insist. Never mind my beard. That young man will not fight another round for many a long semester after I have done with him.'

'Were you such a famous *schläger* formerly?'

'No. Nothing especial. But I can settle Herr Bauer.'

'I do not know about that,' said Greif shaking his head. 'He is one of the best. He came here expressly to pick a quarrel with me, who am supposed to be the best in the University. He is in search of a reputation. You had better be careful.'

'Never fear. Go and arrange matters. I will stay here till you come back. It is too early to go home yet.'

Greif was amazed at his friend's deter-

mination, though he had no choice but to do as he was requested. He walked quickly towards the brewery where he was sure of finding the second in charge of his Korps, and probably a dozen others. At every step the situation seemed more disagreeable, and more wholly unaccountable. He could not imagine why Rex should have cared to mix in the quarrel, and he was annoyed at not being able to settle matters with Bauer at once. His mind was still confused, when he pushed open the door of the room in which his companions were sitting. He was hailed by a chorus of joyful cries.

A couple of novices sprang forward to help him to remove his heavy overcoat. Another hastened to get his favourite drinking-cup filled with beer. The second in charge, a burly fellow with many scars on his face and a hand like a Westphalia ham, made a place for the chief next to his own.

‘We have had a row,’ Greif remarked when he was seated at the board and had drunk a health to all present.

‘Ha, that is a good thing!’ laughed the second. ‘Tell us all about it.’ He drank what remained in his huge measure and handed the mug to a fox to be filled. Then he took a good puff at his pipe and settled himself in an attitude of attention.

‘We have had a row at the Palmengarten,’ said Greif. ‘Rex and I——’

‘You have quarrelled with Rex?’ interrupted the second. He and all his companions detested the man because he took Greif away from them. There was a gleam of hope for the chief if he had quarrelled with his Philistine acquaintance, and all present exchanged significant glances.

‘No. That is not it. A fellow of the Rhine Korps has quarrelled with both of us. He says his name is Bauer. Rex called him a silly boy and told him to hold his tongue before I could speak.’

‘Rex!’ exclaimed all the students in chorus.

‘Ha, that is a good thing!’ laughed the second, blowing the foam from his ale. ‘Provided he will fight,’ he added before he drank.

‘Rex is my friend,’ said Greif quietly.

The murmurs subsided as though by magic, and the burly second set down his measure almost untasted.

‘I wanted to fight the man first,’ continued Greif, ‘but Rex objected and appealed to me as the head of a Korps to get the matter settled at once. He wants to fight to-morrow morning with the rest.’

‘Prosit!’ laughed the second.

‘We thought he was a Philistine! He must be forty years old! What a sight it will be!’ cried a dozen voices.

‘As he demands it, we must oblige him,’ observed Greif.

‘A good thing! A very good thing!’ exclaimed the second more solemnly than before. He rarely said much else, and his hand was infinitely more eloquent than his tongue.

‘I hope it is,’ said Greif. ‘This is your affair. You had better go and see the second of the Rhine Korps at once. Rex is waiting for the answer at the Palmengarten. Remember he is determined to fight at once.’

‘He shall drum till the hair flies about the place,’ answered the second, with an unusual flight of rhetoric, as he slipped on his overcoat and went out.

‘You are not going?’ asked the students as Greif showed signs of following his brother-officer.

‘I cannot leave Rex waiting,’ objected Greif.

‘Send for him to come here! If he really means to fight, he is not such a Philistine as we thought!’ cried two or three.

‘If you like, I will send for him,’ answered Greif. ‘Here, little fox!’ he exclaimed, addressing a beardless youth of vast proportions who sat silent at the end of the table. ‘Go to the Palmengarten and say that Greifenstein wishes Herr Rex to come here. Introduce yourself properly before speaking to him.’

The huge-limbed boy rose without a word, gravely saluted and left the room. Greif was his idol, the type which he aspired to imitate, and he obeyed him like a lamb.

‘So Rex means to fight,’ remarked one of

the young men, who sat opposite to Greif. 'Was he ever in a Korps?'

'Possibly,' answered the chief.

'“The Pinschgau lads went out to fight,”' hummed the student rather derisively, but he did not proceed further than the first line of the old song. Some of the others laughed, and all smiled at the allusion to the comic battle.

'Look here, my good Korps brothers,' said Greif in his dominating tones, 'I will tell you what it is. Rex means to have it out with Bauer to-morrow morning. If he turns out a coward and backs down the ground before the Rhine fellow, you can make game of him as you please, and you know very well that I shall have nothing more to do with him, and that he will be suspended from all intercourse with the Korps. I have my own ideas about what he will do, though Bauer is a devil at deep-carte and has a long arm. Until the question is settled you have no right to laugh at an honourable man who is to be our guest-at-arms, because he is not a Korps student.'

He is our guest as much as the chief of the Heidelberg Saxo-Prussians was when he came over last spring to fight the first in charge of the Franks. Every man who wants to fight deserves respect until he has shown that he is afraid to stand by his words. There—that is all I have to say, and you know I am right. Here is a full measure to the health of all good Swabians, and may the yellow and black *schläger* do good work whether in the hands of guest or fellow. One, two and three! Suabia Hoch!’

‘Hoch! Hoch! Hoch!’ roared twenty lusty young voices.

The speech had produced its effect, as Greif’s speeches usually did, and every student drained his cup to the toast with a good will.

‘But after all,’ said the young fellow who had hummed the offensive song, ‘your friend has not handled a *schläger* since the days of the flood. It is not likely that he can get the better of such a fellow as Bauer—may the incarnate thunder fly into his

body ! I can feel that splinter in my jaw to this day !'

'My dear boy,' said Grief, 'one of two things will happen. Either Rex will give Bauer a dose, and in that case you will feel better ; or else Bauer will set a deep-carte into Rex's jaw, exactly where he hit you, and if that happens you will feel that you are not alone in your misfortunes, which is also a certain satisfaction.'

'You seem remarkably hopeful about Rex,' observed the student. 'Here he comes,' he added as the door opened and Rex appeared attended by the fox.

Every one rose, as usual when a visitor appears under such circumstances. Rex bowed and smiled serenely. He had often been a guest of the Swabians and knew all present. In a few moments he was seated on the chief's right hand. Greif rapped on the table.

'Korps brothers,' he said, 'our friend Rex visits us in a new capacity. He comes not as usual to share the drinking-horn and the yellow-black song-book. He is with us

to-day as a guest-at-arms. Let us drink to his especial welfare.'

'To your especial welfare,' said each student, holding his cup out towards Rex, and then drinking a short draught.

'I revenge myself immediately,' answered Rex, rising as he moved his glass in a circle and glanced round the table. The phrases are consecrated by immemorial usage. He drank, bowed and resumed his seat. He knew well enough that the Swabians did not like him over well, but he was determined that, sooner or later, they should change their minds.

'I congratulate you,' said the same student who had been talking with Greif, 'upon your quarrel with Bauer. You could not have picked out a man whom I detest more cordially. Observe this slash in my jaw—two bone splinters, an artery and nine stitches. It is a reminiscence, not dear but near.'

'A fine cut,' answered Rex, gravely examining the scar. 'A regular *renommir schmiss*, a gash to boast of. A *deep-carte*, I suppose?'

‘Of course,’ said the other, with the superiority of a man who knows the exact part of the face exposed to each cut. ‘It could not be anything else. He has the most surprising limberness of wrist, and he never hits the bandage by mistake—never! You strike high tierce like lightning and your blade is back in guard—oh yes! but before you are there his deep-carte sits in the middle of your cheek. Whatever you do, it is the same.’

Every one was listening, and Greif frowned at the speaker, whose intention was evident. He wanted to frighten Rex by an account of his adversary’s prowess. Rex looked gravè but did not appear in the least disturbed.

‘So?’ he ejaculated. ‘Really! Well, I can put a silver thaler in my cheek and save my teeth, at all events. They are very good.’

A roar of laughter greeted this response.

‘But that is contrary to the code,’ objected the student, laughing with the rest. He was not an ill-humoured man in reality.

‘Yes—I was joking,’ said Rex. ‘But I once saw a man fight with an iron nose on his face.’

‘How was that?’ was asked by every one.

‘He was a brave fellow of the right sort,’ said Rex, ‘but he had a long nose and a short arm. In fact he had formed the habit of parrying with his nose, like a Greek statue—you know, all those they find have had their noses knocked off by Turks. Now the nose is a noble feature, and is of great service to man, when he wants to find out whether he is in Italy or Germany. But as a weapon of defence it leaves much to be desired. The man of whom I am telling you had grown so much used to using it in this way, that whenever he saw anything coming in the shape of a carte he thrust it forward as naturally as a pig does when he sees an acorn. After a couple of semesters the cartes sat on his nose from bridge to tip, one after the other, like the days of the week in a calendar. But when the third semester began, and the cartes began to fall

too near together, and sometimes two in the same place, the doctors said that the nose was worn-out, though it had once been good. And the man told the second in charge, and the second told the first, and the first laid the matter before the assembled Korps. Thereupon the whole Seniorum Conventus sat in solemn committee upon this war-worn nose, and decided that its owner need fight no more. But he was not only brave; he possessed the invention of Prometheus, combined with the diabolical sense of humour which so much distinguished the late Mephistopheles. He offered to go on fighting if he might be allowed an iron nose. Goetz of Berlichingen, he said, had won battles with an iron hand, and the case was analogous. The proposition was put to the vote and carried unanimously amidst thunders of applause. The iron nose was made and fitted to the iron eye-pieces, and my friend appeared on the fighting ground looking like a figure of Kladderadatsch disguised as Arminius. He wore out two iron noses while he remained in the Korps, but

the destruction of the enemy's weapons more than counterbalanced this trifling expense. When he left, his armour was attached to a life-sized photograph of his head, which hangs to this day above two crossed rapiers in the Kneipe. That is the history of the man with the iron nose.'

There had been much half-suppressed laughter while Rex was telling his story, and when he had finished, the students roared with delight. Rex had never before given himself so much trouble to amuse them, and the effect of his narrative was immense.

'He talks as if he knew something about it,' said one, nudging his neighbour.

'Perhaps he helped to wear out the nose,' answered the other still laughing.

'A health to you all,' cried Rex, draining his full measure. 'And may none of you parry carte with the proboscis,' he added, as he set down the empty cup.

'Ha! That is a good thing!' laughed the voice of the burly second as he entered the room, his face beaming with delight.

‘Out with the foxes, there is business here for a few minutes.’

The foxes, who were not privileged to hear the deliberations of their elders upon such grave matters, rose together and filed out, carrying their pipes and drinking-cups with them. Then the second sat down in his vacant place.

‘Well?’ asked Greif. ‘Is it all settled?’

‘Yes. The cattle wanted to fight you first. I said the Philistine insisted—excuse me, no offence. Good. Now—that was all.’

The second buried his nose in a foaming tankard.

‘Is it for to-morrow morning?’ asked Rex calmly.

‘Palmengarten, back entrance, four sharp.’

‘What do you mean?’ asked Greif. ‘Are we to fight in the Palmengarten, in the restaurant?’

The second nodded, and lighted his pipe.

‘Poetic,’ he observed. ‘Marble floor—fountain playing — palm trees in background.’

‘Then we must go there at that hour so as not to be seen?’

‘The Poodle thinks it is at Schneckenkinkel, and is going out by the early train to lie in wait,’ chuckled the burly student. ‘There he will sit all the morning like a sparrow limed on a twig.’

‘Have we any other pairs?’ asked Greif absently.

‘Three others. Two foxes and Höllenstein. He is gone to bed and I am going to send the foxes after him. We can make a night of it, if you like.’

‘I will stay with you,’ said Rex, who seemed jovially inclined.

Neither Greif nor the second thought it his business to suggest that their combatant had better get some rest before the battle. When two o’clock struck, Rex was teaching them all a new song, which was not in the book, his clear strong voice ringing out steadily and tunefully through the smoky chamber, his smooth complexion neither flushed nor pale from the night’s carousal, his stony eyes as colourless and

forbidding, as his smile was genial and unaffected.

As they rose to go, he caught sight of a huge silver-mounted horn that hung behind his chair.

‘I will drink that out to-morrow night, with your permission,’ he said with a light laugh.

‘Bravo!’ shouted the excited chorus.

‘He is a little drunk,’ whispered the student whom Bauer had wounded, addressing his neighbour.

‘Or a boaster, who will back down the floor,’ answered the other shrugging his shoulders.

‘I hope you may do it,’ said the first speaker aloud and turning to Rex. ‘If you do, I will empty it after you to your health, and so will every Swabian here.’

‘Ay, that will we!’ exclaimed Greif, and the others joined readily in the promise. Seeing how probable it was that by the next evening Rex would be in bed, with a bag of ice on his head, it was not likely that they would be called upon to perform the feat.

‘It is a beer-oath then!’ said Rex. ‘Let us go and fight.’

And they filed out into the narrow street, silently and quietly, in fear of attracting attention to their movements.

CHAPTER IX

THE scene presented by the Palmengarten restaurant at four o'clock in the morning was extremely strange. Since Greif and Rex had dined together in the place on the previous evening, the arrangement of the hall had been considerably changed. The palms alone remained in their places around the four sides, and their long spiked leaves and gigantic fans cast fantastic shadows under the brilliant gaslight. The broad marble floor was cleared of furniture and strewn with sawdust, some fifty chairs being arranged at the upper end of the room, around and behind the fountain, whose tiny stream rose high into the air and tinkled as it fell back again into the basin below. A few small tables remained in

the corners. The place was lighted by a corona of gas-jets, and was on the whole as bright and roomy a fencing ground as the heart of a Korps student could desire. The proprietor, who entered with enthusiasm into the scheme, moved about, followed by a confidential waiter in his white apron, examining every detail, adjusting the position of the tables and chairs, turning the principal key of the gas-jets a little so as to obtain the best possible flame, and every now and then running to the door which opened to the outer chambers, as he fancied that he heard some one tapping at the street entrance. The whole effect of the preparations suggested something between a concert and the reception of a deputation, and no one would have suspected that a party of young men were about to engage in a serious tournament amidst the fantastic decorations and the shadows of the beautiful plants, beneath the flood of light that bathed everything in warm lustre.

Presently the expected signal was heard,

and the proprietor rushed breathlessly to the outer door. Greif, Rex and their companions entered swiftly and silently, followed by the liveried servant of the Korps who carried an extraordinary collection of bags and bundles, which he dropped upon the floor with a grunt of satisfaction as soon as he was inside. Then he took up his burden again, at the command of the burly second, and carried his traps into the illuminated hall. With the speed of a man accustomed to his work he began to unpack everything, laying out the basket-hilts of the rapiers, adorned with battered colours, side by side, and next to them half a dozen bright blades freshly ground and cleaned, each with its well-oiled screw-nut upon the rough end that was to run through the guard, while the small iron wrench was placed in readiness at hand. Then three leathern jerkins were taken from their sacks and examined to see whether every string and buckle was in order, then the arm and neck bandages, the iron eye-pieces, the gauntlets padded

in the wrist, the long gloves and stout caps with leathern visors worn by the seconds, the regulation shirts for the combatants, the bottle of spirits for rubbing their tired arms, a couple of sponges, and a dozen trifles of all sorts—in a word, all the paraphernalia of student warfare.

The next person to appear upon the ground was the surgeon, a young man with a young beard, who had not been many years out of a Korps himself, and who understood by experience the treatment of every scratch and wound that a rapier can inflict. He also carried a bag, though a small one, and began to lay out his instruments in a business-like fashion upon the table reserved for his use. Then there was another summons from the door and the members of the Rhine Korps filed silently in, their dark blue caps contrasting oddly with the brilliant yellow of the Swabians. They saluted gravely and kept together upon the opposite side of the room. Next came the Westphalians, in green caps, and the Saxons with black ones, till nearly a hundred students filled half the

available space in the hall. Then the seconds in charge met together in the centre and looked over their lists of duels. There was a moment of total silence in the chamber, until the result was known, for no one could tell exactly which duel would be fought first. Then the four separated again and returned quickly to their comrades.

‘We are to let fly first,’ said the Swabian second to his chief. ‘Now, Höllenstein, old man, jump into your drumming skin!’

‘You will be next,’ said Greif turning to Rex and speaking in an undertone. ‘You had better dress while Höllenstein is out with the Saxon. The affair will not last long, I fancy.’

Höllenstein, a thickset fellow with a baby’s complexion, but whose sharp eye showed his temper, went quietly about the operation of dressing, assisted by a couple of foxes, the second in charge and the Korps servant, who was as expert in preparations for duels as an English valet in dressing his master for following the hounds. In ten minutes everything was ready, the seconds

on each side drew on their gloves, settled the long visors of their caps well over their eyes, took their blunt rapiers in hand and stepped forward. The witnesses of each party, also gloved, stood on the left of the combatants, it being their duty to watch the blades, and to see whether either fencer backed down the ground. The umpire took out his pocket-book and pencil and stop-watch, and placed himself where he could look across the fighting. The armed fighters stood up face to face at half the length of the room, a novice supporting the right arm of each high in the air.

‘Paukanten parat? Are the combatants ready?’ inquired the umpire, who was the chief of the Westphalians.

‘Parat! Ready!’ was answered from both sides simultaneously.

‘Silence!’ cried the umpire. ‘The duel begins. Auf die Mensur! Fertig! Los!’

Höllenstein and his adversary walked forward, accompanied by their seconds. Each struck a formal tierce cut at the other, and a halt was cried. They scarcely retired

and the umpire repeated the words 'To the fight! Ready! Go!' and the duel began in earnest. Both were accomplished swordsmen, and the combat promised to be a long one. They exhibited to the admiring spectators every intricacy of *schläger* fencing, in all its wonderful neatness and quickness of cut and parry. From time to time a halt was called, and each man retired to his original place, his right arm being caught and held in air by the 'bearing-fox,' as the novice is called whose business it is to fill the office. The object of this proceeding is to prevent a rush of blood to the arm, which might cause pain and numbness in the member and interfere with the combatant's quickness.

'A couple of good fencers,' remarked Rex as he rose from his chair and went to prepare himself for what was before him.

'You will see what will happen,' answered Greif with a smile of confidence in his comrade.

The 'drumming,' as the students call it, proceeded for some minutes, and nothing

was heard in the hall but the sharp whistle and ring of the blades and the sound of shuffling feet upon the sawdust-covered floor. All at once Höllenstein turned his hand completely round upon his wrist in the act of striking what is called a deep-carte, remained a moment in this singular position, which seemed to confuse his adversary, and then as the latter was making up his mind what to do, suddenly finished the movement and returned to his guard in time to parry the inevitable tierce. A thin line of scarlet instantly appeared upon the Saxon's face, straight across his left cheek.

‘Halt!’ cried both seconds at once.

‘She sat!’ exclaimed the second of the Swabians, throwing down his blunt sword and making for a goblet of beer that was placed in readiness for him, as though he took no further interest in the proceedings. Höllenstein stood as usual with his arm supported by the novice, while the Saxon was examined by the surgeon.

‘Abfuhr!’ said the latter. The word

means that the wounded man must be removed.

‘Please to declare the Abfuhr!’ said the Swabian second relinquishing his glass and turning sharply to the umpire.

‘Saxonia is led away,’ declared the Westphalian chief, making a note of the fact in his pocket-book, and shutting up his watch.

Before he had finished speaking, Höllenstein had given up his sword and was beginning to disarm, while a fox wiped the perspiration from his placid pink face.

‘Nicely done, old man,’ said Greif, coming up to him.

‘I like that way of doing it, do not you?’ inquired Höllenstein with a childlike smile. ‘I practised all last summer on my father’s orderly. You know we always keep fencing things at home.’

‘And how did the soldier like it?’ asked Greif with a laugh.

‘Better than you would,’ replied the other laughing, too. ‘He is a clever churl and has discovered the answer to the attack. Give me some beer, little fox!’

The novice obeyed, and a Homeric draught interrupted the interview. Greif turned to Rex, upon whose face the iron eye-pieces were being adjusted. All the Swabians present were collected around him, excepting the second, who sat in solitary glory by his beer, opposite the Rhine Korps, awaiting events with stolid indifference.

‘Take care!’ said Greif whispering into the ear of his friend. ‘I have never seen you fence, and Bauer’s cartes are famous.’

‘Remember the big horn!’ said some of the men around him.

‘I will not forget it,’ answered Rex smiling, as he opened and shut his hand in the gauntlet, and then held out the palm to be chalked. ‘And I hope you will not forget your promises either,’ he added.

‘Will you not have a glass of brandy?’ asked some one with a scarcely perceptible tinge of irony.

‘My friend,’ replied Rex, turning sharply round in the direction of the speaker’s voice, ‘exactly fifteen minutes after the word “Go,” I will drink a bottle of champagne

with you, and I should be greatly obliged if you would direct the waiter to put the wine in ice at once, as it will scarcely be cool in so short a time.'

'Willingly,' said the student with a dry laugh, in which some of the bystanders joined, while all looked curiously at the man who seemed so absolutely sure of success. Greif's face was grave, however, and he himself selected the rapier for Rex's hand. All was ready and the adversaries stood up in their places. Bauer the Rhine Korps man, was an ugly sight. The eyepieces gave a singularly sinister expression to his sallow face, and his disorderly hair looked like a wig of twisted black wire, while the jerkin he wore seemed almost dropping from his long, sinewy frame. He made his sharp weapon whistle three or four times in the air and tapped his foot impatiently upon the marble floor as though anxious to begin. Greif's heart beat quickly, and he was conscious that he would infinitely rather fight the duel himself.

The umpire began by declaring that the

duel was between Herr Bauer of the Rhine Korps and Herr Rex, who fought with Swabian weapons.

‘Formerly of the Heidelberg Saxo-Prussians,’ said Rex quietly.

Every one started and looked at him, on hearing the name of the most renowned Korps in Germany.

‘With a charge?’ inquired the umpire, politely, and holding his pencil ready to enter the fact upon his note-book.

‘First,’ answered Rex laconically.

The students looked at each other and began to wonder how it was possible that such an important personage as a former chief of the Heidelberg Saxo-Prussians could have so long concealed his identity. But the umpire did not wait, though he reflected that Rex must have been in activity a very long time ago. Of course, the statement must be true, as any one might verify it instantly by a reference to the registers.

‘Paukanten parat?’ inquired the umpire.

‘Parat!’

The spectators observed that Bauer’s first

tierce was more than formal, and that if Rex's guard had not been good, it might very well have done some damage. Rex's fencing was altogether different from Höllestein's. He seemed to possess neither the grace nor the dexterity which distinguished that gentle swordsman, although in figure he was far lighter and more actively made. And yet Bauer could not get at him. He was one of those fencers who seem to work awkwardly, but who sometimes puzzle their adversaries more than any professional master of the art. His movements appeared to be slow and yet they were never behind time, and he had a curious instinct about what was coming. Bauer's famous deep-cartes were always met by a cut which at once parried the attack and confused the striker. Once or twice Rex's long blade shot out above his adversary's head with tremendous force, but Bauer was tall, quick and accomplished, and the attempt did not succeed. Greif began to feel that the match was by no means an uneven one, and he breathed more freely.

‘I think you could manage it, if you tried harder,’ he whispered to Rex, during a short halt.

‘Of course,’ answered Rex. ‘What do you expect?’ Even through the iron eye-pieces Greif could see the colourless, stony stare of his friend’s eyes.

Greif would have been more than satisfied if the duel ended without a scratch on either side, and such a result would have more than surprised the spectators of the encounter. Every one present knew by experience that in *schläger* fencing a month’s practice is worth all the theory and skill which a man might possess who had not touched a rapier for years. Nevertheless, as the encounter proceeded, and both remained unhurt, Greif regretted that Rex should have boasted that Bauer would be disabled and laid up for a long time. Meanwhile the saturnine Rhine man grew slowly angry, as his arm became wearied by the protracted effort. His wiry locks were matted with perspiration, his shaggy brows knit themselves into an ugly frown, which

was made more hideous by the black iron spectacles, he stamped his foot angrily, and made desperate efforts to get at Rex's face with his favourite under-cut.

'I am going to try now,' said Rex during the next halt, and turning his head to Greif.

He went forward again, and every one noticed that his rapier was higher than usual and seemed not to cover him at all. He brandished it in the air in a way that looked utterly foolhardy. Bauer came on furiously, feeling that if he failed now he must be laughed at for ever. His long arm turned with the rapidity of lightning, and every one saw the whistling blade flash towards Rex's unprotected cheek. To the amazement of all present the cut did not take effect. There was a loud clash of steel, accompanied by a harsh, grating noise. With irresistible fury Rex had brought down his weapon, countering in carte, parrying with his basket-hilt and then tearing, as it were, the reverse edge of his flexible blade through his enemy's face, from forehead to chin.

‘She sat!’ exclaimed the Swabian second, mechanically. But instead of dropping his blunt sword and making for his beer, he stood open-mouthed, staring stupidly at the unfortunate Bauer, as though he could not believe his eyes. The surgeon ran forward, looked at the wound and almost immediately nodded to the umpire.

‘Rhenania is led away!’ said the latter, in the midst of a dead silence.

It would have been contrary to custom and etiquette for the Swabians to manifest any noisy satisfaction at the result of the affair, but as Rex drew back he was surrounded and hemmed in by Greif’s comrades, who tore the rapier from his grasp, pressed his gloved hands, untied the strings and loosed the buckles of his jerkin, wiped the slight perspiration from his face, and divested him of all his defensive accoutrements almost before he had breath to speak. A couple of novices rubbed his arm, while twenty young fellows congratulated him in an undertone. The two who were nearest were the student

whom Bauer had formerly hurt, and the one with whom Rex had promised to drink the wine. The latter held a glass of champagne to the conqueror's lips.

'Your health,' said Rex as he drank. 'It is not too cold to drink,' he added with a smile when he had tasted the liquid.

'With a little practice, you would have to drink it hot,' laughed the other.

'You must teach me that trick,' said the rosy-cheeked Höllenstein. 'It is the best I ever saw.'

'The Rhine Korps will have to make a contract for buying iron noses wholesale,' remarked some one else, referring to the story Rex had told on the previous evening.

Greif stood near by, looking on, with undisguised satisfaction, and not yet altogether recovered from his surprise. He could see at a glance that Rex's position with regard to the Korps was wholly changed, and that henceforth his friend was likely to be almost as popular as himself. The fact that Rex had been chief of the Saxo-Prussians was in itself a sufficient

recommendation and would long since have inspired them with respect, had Rex chosen to disclose his former dignity. Greif wondered why he had been silent, but on the whole he was glad that the man should have earned popularity by an exploit rather than upon the strength of his former importance.

For the present, conversation was impossible. A couple of Greif's novices were to go out for the first time, and it was necessary to encourage them and see that everything went well. Swabia was in luck on that day, for the two youths acquitted themselves honourably, each fighting fifteen rounds without being touched, and each inflicting a couple of very small scratches upon their enemies.

'A white day for the Swabians,' said Greif, when he at last sat down to a sausage and a glass of beer for breakfast.

His Korps had nothing more to do with the proceedings, for they had no more duels on the day's list, and as none of them had been hurt, they prepared to watch the

subsequent fights over a glass of beer, collecting themselves round Greif, Rex, and the thirsty second. It was by this time about five o'clock in the morning. The gas burned steadily overhead and the meeting of arms proceeded as regularly and quickly as any Roman show of gladiators. From time to time the Korps servants washed the blood-stained marble floor and threw down fresh sawdust for the next encounter. The surgeon and the wounded were kept out of sight behind the plants, and nothing disagreeable met the eye. The gleam and flashing of the steel swords under the yellow light, the gay colours of the caps, the quick movements of combatants and seconds were all pleasant to see against the background of stately exotic plants which made the hall look like a great conservatory.

Greif looked at it all and enjoyed it, almost wishing that this might be the last scene of the kind which he should attend, and that he might always have the impression of it when he thought of his student

life, so different from the dismal meetings that sometimes took place in deserted barns, or in outhouses of country inns. In some ways he preferred the Palmengarten as a fighting ground to the forest glades in which the summer duels were sometimes fought. He felt, as he sat there, chief of his Korps, and looked up to by every one, very much as he fancied a Roman emperor must have felt in his high seat over the arena. A deep sense of satisfaction descended upon his soul. He had the best place, his Korps had been victorious, his best friend had highly distinguished himself, justifying Greif's own opinion of him, and gaining in ten minutes the respect and admiration of all his comrades. Rex watched him in silence, as though trying to guess his thoughts.

‘Yes, you are a lucky fellow,’ he said at last, hitting the mark as usual.

The words chilled Greif, and his expression changed. All at once, in that crowded place of meeting, amidst the satisfaction of victory and the excitement of other struggles,

the memory of his home in the dark forest rose before him like a gloomy shadow. His mind went back to that evening when Rex's first prediction had been so suddenly fulfilled, and then, in an instant, it flashed upon him that only last night Rex had been drawing circles and strange figures upon the marble table at the moment when Bauer had approached them. He turned to his friend and spoke in a low voice.

‘You knew it by the figure,’ he said. ‘That is the reason you were so confident.’

‘Yes,’ answered Rex quietly. ‘Of course I did.’

‘It is true that you are a first-rate fencer,’ remarked Greif doubtfully.

‘Nothing extraordinary. The man had not a chance, from the first, especially as we settled the matter so soon after the question was asked.’

‘What question?’

‘The question I asked when I set up the figure.’

Greif was silent. He could not bring himself to believe in what he regarded as a

sham science, and he could not reconcile any belief in such absurdities with the indubitable fact that Rex was a most enlightened man, learned in his own department, cultivated in mind, a scorner of old-fashioned prejudices and ideas, distrustful of all cheap theories and of all scientific men who talked eloquently about the progress of learning. That such a person should put any faith in astrology was a monstrous incongruity. And yet Rex not only trusted in what he pretended to foretell, but was actually willing to risk serious personal injuries on the strength of his divinations. Greif thought of what he had read concerning fanatics and the almost incredible good fortune which sometimes attended them. Then a wild desire overcame him to know what Rex had seen in the figure on that memorable night which had brought the news of Rieseneck's intended return.

‘We have not spoken of those things lately,’ he said after a long pause. ‘Will you tell me what it is that must happen to me, according to your theory?’

‘There are some things of which it is best not to talk at all,’ Rex answered, looking earnestly at his companion. His hard eyes softened a little.

‘Is it as bad as that?’ asked Greif with an attempt to laugh.

‘It is as bad as that; and as it will all happen through no fault of yours, and since nothing which you, at least, can do, could prevent it, it is better that you should not know.’

‘You will not tell me?’

‘Not unless you insist upon it, and you will not.’

‘Why not? I do insist, as much as one friend can with another.’ Greif could not quite submit to Rex’s way of saying what he would do, or would not do.

‘There are good reasons why you should not,’ returned the latter calmly. ‘In the first place we are good friends, and if I told you what is before you, it would be impossible not to injure our amicable relations. You feel that, as well as I do. If warning could help you in the least, I would not be

silent. If I had any advice to give you, I would offer it, at the risk of offending you. You know that in your heart you would not quite believe me, if I spoke, and that you would always fancy I had some object in view, until all were accomplished. Even then you might never forget the disagreeable association between my personality and your calamities. I prefer to remain where I am in your estimation. Besides, why should I cause you all the pain of anticipation, when it can do no good? After all, nobody is infallible. What if I had made a mistake in my calculations?’

‘That is true,’ answered Greif, though his tone showed some doubt. Although he really did not believe that calculation or mathematics of any sort had anything to do with Rex’s seeming knowledge of future events, the possibility of a mistake seemed small indeed, when Rex himself suggested it.

‘I knew you would not insist,’ said Rex. ‘Indeed it is much better to watch those two fellows drumming on each other’s heads,

and to drink our early draught in peace without speculating about the future. Look at them ! It is nearly a quarter of an hour, and not a scratch yet, though they hit each other with every tierce, flat as a soup-plate falling upon a millpond. But it is a pretty sight.'

Greif did not answer. The gladiatorial show had lost its charms for him and his mind brooded gloomily over coming events. The sun was not up, though it was broad dawn when he and his companions went out into the cool, silent streets, realising when they breathed the morning air the closeness of the heated atmosphere they had quitted. They separated by degrees, dropping off, one after the other, as each approached his lodgings, but before going home they all accompanied Rex to the street door of his dwelling.

When Greif was alone he threw open his window to the fresh morning breeze, and sitting down as he was, drank in the air, which to him seemed so delightfully sweet, though it would have chilled a weaker man

to the bone. It was all the refreshment he needed, in spite of a sleepless night, spent chiefly in an atmosphere heated by gas and heavy with the fumes of tobacco. The morning, too, was exceptionally clear and beautiful. A scarcely perceptible mist blended the neutral tints of the old town with the faint colours of the sky, which changed by gentle degrees from dark blue to violet, from violet to palest green, then to yellow and then at last to the living blue of day above, while a vast fan of golden light trembled above the spot whence the sun would presently rise. The level rays gilded the slender cathedral spire, and the glass of many a pointed gable-window in the town sent back the flaming reflection. All above was warm, and all below was cold in the blue shadow that still darkened the flowing river and the narrow streets beyond.

For a time Greif gave himself up to the pleasure of the sight and sensation. His instinctive love of nature was strong enough to absorb his whole being at certain moments, for it was real, and not cultivated, thorough

and altogether unconscious of itself. But when the exceptional loveliness of the dawn and sunrise was drowned in the flooding light of an ordinarily fine day, Greif rose from his seat by the window and went about the business of dressing regretfully, as though he wished that the morning might sink back again into the twilight, as quickly as in the far north, when the sun first shows the edge of his disc above the horizon in early spring.

He had no thought of taking any rest, and intended to go to the University as usual, for it was a part of his Teutonic character to take his amusement at the expense of his sleep rather than to the detriment of his work. After such a night an Italian would have gone to bed, a Frenchman would have swallowed a brimming glass of absinthe and would have passed the day in visiting his fellow-students, or fellow-artists, an Englishman would have taken a plunge in the icy river and would have gone for a walk in the country. But Greif did none of these things. He drank his coffee and went to his books and his lectures

as though nothing unusual had happened. He did it mechanically and felt himself obliged to do it, as much as any guard-officer in Berlin, who comes home from a ball at dawn, exchanges the inadmissible kid gloves and varnished boots he wears in society for the regulation articles of leather, smooths his hair with the little brushes he always has in his pocket, draws his sword and marches out with his company of grenadiers to the exercising ground, as merrily and as naturally as though he had spent the night in bed.

Before he left the house again, Greif received a letter from his father. It was some time since the latter had mentioned Rieseneck, and Greif did not now expect any news concerning him. He turned pale as he read the contents. It appeared that Rieseneck had landed in Europe and intended to proceed without delay to Berlin, in order to report himself at the Home Office as one who desired to take advantage of the amnesty with the intention of residing in his native country.

‘I myself,’ wrote Greifenstein, ‘have serious doubts in this matter. I cannot believe that your uncle is included in the general pardon for political offenders. He committed a crime against both civil and military law and was condemned by a court-martial. It would have been more respectable to shoot him at once. As this was not done, I have actually been obliged to write to him now, warning him that in my opinion he is not safe. In the meanwhile, be careful, my dear boy, and keep amongst your own Korps, where you are not likely to have trouble about your infamous relation. He is not worth fighting for, though you would of course be obliged to go out if a stranger made disagreeable remarks. Happily, in a little more than a month, you will be at home, where such things cannot occur. Praise be to Heaven, we are very well, though your mother continues to be more silent than usual. Hexerl has got over the distemper very well and is a fine pup. I have decided not to fell the old wood, though it is quite time. What need have I for the

money? Let the trees stand till the wind blows them down. Perhaps you will be glad, though you do not often go to that part of the forest. I have sent your rifle to Stuttgart to be re-sighted as you wished. And so, good-bye.'

Greif put the letter into his pocket and went gloomily on his way to the lecture, reflecting that at that very moment Riese-neck was probably on his way to Berlin.

CHAPTER X

THE snow fell heavily in the Black Forest during the third week of December. It lay in great white drifts against the huge rampart of Greifenstein, blown against the rough masonry by the bitter north wind, until the approach to the main gate was a deep trench dug in the white covering of the earth. The driving blast had driven great patches of flakes against the lofty wall so that they stuck to the stones and looked like broad splashes of white paint. The north sides of the pointed roofs on the towers were white, too, and gleamed in the occasional bursts of sunshine that interrupted the fierce weather. In the forest, the slanting branches of the firs were loaded down with irregular masses of snow, through which the needle foliage

looked as black as ink. Not a spot of colour was visible anywhere, for everything was either black or white.

Old Greifenstein was no more afraid of the weather than he was of anything else. Day after day he went out with his gun and his dog, to fight his way for miles through the drifts, up and down hill, over the open moor where the snow was not knee-deep, under the giant trees from which great lumps of it fell now and then upon his fur cap and grizzled hair, down into the dells and gorges where it was nearly up to his neck, and where his sturdy dog struggled wildly through the passage his master had made. Greifenstein pursued the only amusement of his life in his own solitary fashion, rarely shooting at anything, never missing when he did, killing a buck once or twice in a week and bringing it home on his own shoulders for the use of his household, or lying in wait for six or seven hours at a time to get a shot at a stag; grimly pleased to be always alone, and silently satisfied in the thought that all was his, and his only, to

kill or to let live at his seigneurial discretion. The keepers knew that he wanted no companions, and they kept out of his way when he was abroad, not dissatisfied perhaps that their tireless master should do most of their work in the bitter weather, leaving them to smoke their pipes in their cottages or to drink their beer and cherry spirits in the inn of the distant village. He left the house in the morning and rarely returned before dusk. It is not strange that his humour should have grown more stern and melancholy under such circumstances.

Greifenstein and his wife seemed to understand each other, however, and though days passed during which they scarcely exchanged a word, neither complained of the other's silence nor felt the slightest desire to do so. From time to time one of the servants declared that he could bear the life no longer, and gave up his large wages and gorgeous apparel to return to the city. He was replaced by another, without any remark. Contrary to German custom, Greifenstein never expected any one to stay

long in the house, and merely stipulated that any one who wished to leave should give warning a fortnight previously. Neither he nor his wife were yet so old as to tempt servants to stay on for the death, in the hope of picking up something worth having in the general confusion. There was something strange in the way the pair lived, lonely and unloved in their ancient home, amidst a crowd of ever-changing attendants, who succumbed one by one to the awful dreariness of the isolated life, and went away to give place to others, who in their turn would give it up after six months or a year. And yet neither Greifenstein nor Clara would have changed their existence.

Greifenstein had abandoned the attempt to explain his wife's illness, if she were really ill, but he could not help seeing the alteration that was going on for the worse in her appearance and character, and the sight did not contribute to his peace. He himself looked much the same as ever. After receiving the news that his half-brother intended to return, he stiffened his

stiff neck to meet whatever misfortune was in store for him ; and when he learned that Rieseneck was in Europe, he only set his teeth a little closer and tramped a little more savagely through the snow-drifts after the game. He knew that he could do nothing to hinder the progress of events, and he knew that if his brother came to Greifenstein, he should need all his strength and energy in dealing with him. There was nothing to do but to wait. As for Clara's secret, the more he thought about it, the more persuaded he was that it was not connected with Rieseneck, but with some other person. He grew anxious, however, as he watched her, for it was now clear that unless something occurred to revive her vital energy and her spirits, she must soon become an invalid altogether, even if she did not die of her sufferings.

More than once, Greifenstein proposed to go away, to travel, to spend the winter in a southern climate, but she refused to leave her home, with a firmness that surprised him. There was Greif, she said, and

Greif must be considered. When he was married they might go away and leave the castle to the young couple. Until then she would not move. Greifenstein could not but see the wisdom of this course. Meanwhile he attempted to induce his wife to live more in the open air, to ride, to drive, to do anything. But she confessed that she was too weak to face the inclement weather.

Greifenstein was a kind-hearted man in his own peculiar way, and he began to be sorry for her. She no longer distressed his sense of fitness, as formerly, by her inopportune interruptions, her wild smiles, her hysterical laughter, her pitifully flippant talk. He said to himself that she must be ill indeed, to be so serious and quiet. Perhaps she needed amusement. His ideas of diversion were not of a very gay nature, and since she would neither leave the house nor the country he did not quite see what he could do to amuse her. But the thought that it was necessary for her health grew until he felt that it was his duty to do

something. Then he hesitated no longer and made a desperate attempt, involving a considerable sacrifice to his own inclinations. He proposed to read aloud to her out of the best German authors. Even poor Clara, whose sense of humour was almost wholly gone, smiled faintly and opened her faded eyes very wide at the suggestion.

‘What an extraordinary idea!’ she exclaimed.

The time when Greifenstein made his proposition was the evening, when the two sat in their easy-chairs on each side of the great heraldically carved chimney-piece in the drawing-room. They generally read to themselves, and each had a small table with a shaded lamp and a pile of books.

‘My dear,’ answered Greifenstein, ‘it is not a question of ideas. I have examined the matter and I have come to the conclusion that you must be amused. It is therefore my duty to provide you with amusement. As I cannot sing, nor dance, and as you do not play cards, I cannot think of any more fitting method of diverting you than by

reading aloud. German literature offers much variety. You have only to choose the author you prefer, and I will read as much as you like.'

Greifenstein was absolutely in earnest, and delivered his remarks in his usual dry and matter-of-fact way. When he had finished speaking he took up the volumes that were on his table, one after the other, and looked at the titles on the covers, as though already trying to decide upon the one which would best suit his purpose. Clara did not find a ready answer to his arguments, and her smile had disappeared. Her wasted hands lay idly in her lap, and her tired head sank forward upon her breast. She wished it were all over, and that she might fall asleep without the dread of waking. Greifenstein did not notice her.

'What shall it be?' he asked. She raised her face slowly and looked at him.

'Oh, Hugo, I would rather not!' she exclaimed faintly.

Her husband laid down the volume he had last taken up, leaned back in his chair,

folded his knotted hands over his knee and looked at her intently.

‘Clara,’ he said after a few moments, ‘what is the matter with you?’

‘Nothing, nothing at all!’ she answered, with a feeble effort to look cheerful.

‘There is no object in telling me that,’ returned Greifenstein, still keeping his eyes fixed upon her. ‘There is something the matter with you, and it is something serious. I have watched you for a long time. Either you are bodily ill, or else some matter troubles your mind.’

‘Oh no! Nothing, I assure you,’ she replied in a scarcely audible tone.

‘I repeat that it is of no use. I do not wish to question you, my dear,’ he continued, almost kindly. ‘Whatever your thoughts are, they are your own. But I cannot see you wasting away before my eyes without wishing to help you. It is part of my duty. Now a man is stronger than a woman, and less imaginative. It may be that you are distressing yourself with little reason, and that, if you would confide in me, I might

demonstrate to you that you have no cause for repining. Consider well, whether you can tell me your trouble, and give me an answer.'

Clara listened, at first scarcely heeding what he said. Then as she realised the nature of his request and thought of her secret, she fancied that she must go mad. It seemed as though some diabolical power were at hand, forcing her slowly, slowly, against her will, to rise up from her chair, to tell the story, to speak the truth. Her brain reeled. She could hear the fatal words ringing through the room in the familiar tones of her own voice, distinctly, one by one, omitting nothing in the immensity of her self-accusation. She could feel the icy horror creeping through bone and marrow, as the truth tortured her in the utterance of it. She could see Greifenstein's grey face transformed with rage and hatred, she trembled under the inhuman savageness of his fiery eyes, she saw his tall body rise up before her, and his hand raised to strike, and she covered her face to die.

It was only a waking dream. The stillness roused her to life, her hands dropped from her eyes, and she saw her husband sitting quietly in his place and gazing at her with the same kindly, anxious glance as before. She had not spoken, nor uttered any sound, and Greifenstein had not seen the death-pallor under her paint. He had only seen her lift her hands to her face and take them away again almost immediately. In that moment she had suffered the pain of hell, but her secret was still her own. That terrible, unseen power that had pressed her to speak was gone, and no one knew what was in her heart.

‘You are certainly very far from well,’ said Greifenstein, returning to the attack with characteristic pertinacity. ‘Can you not make up your mind to tell me?’

‘No!’ she cried suddenly in a terrified voice. Then out of sheer fright she made an enormous effort over herself, and laughed aloud. Under the influence of that mortal dread, in the supreme exertion she made to destroy the effect of the monosyllable that

had escaped her lips, the laugh sounded natural. It was well done, for it was done for life or death, and if it failed she was betrayed. That single 'No' had been almost enough to ruin all, but her laugh saved her, though she trembled in every weakened joint when its echoes died away among the carved rafters of the great room, and she felt the drops of cold perspiration moving softly over her forehead towards the rouge on her cheeks.

'Ah,' exclaimed Greifenstein, 'that sounds more like yourself. Perhaps we ought to talk more in the evening. It does me good to hear you laugh nowadays. Let us talk, by all means. I am sure all this is only a foolish fit of melancholy, is it not?'

'Oh, no doubt it is. Let us try and talk, if you like.'

'I am too silent a man for you, Clara,' said her husband reflectively. 'It is certainly my duty to make an effort.'

'It is just as much mine,' she answered with an earnestness that attracted his notice. She was thinking that unless she

roused herself, the fearful scene that had been enacted in her imagination might some day take place in reality.

‘No,’ said Greifenstein. ‘It is you who are ill, and it is you who must be amused. Now, what do you say to my proposition? Shall I read something to you? Shall it be Goethe, or Schiller, or Heine? You know all the modern writers well enough.’

‘Something from Heine then, if you will,’ answered Clara. ‘You are so kind! Perhaps he will make us laugh.’

‘Yes,’ echoed her husband. ‘Perhaps Heine will make us laugh.’

The ghastly entertainment began, and continued for an hour, but the merriment was not as great as had been anticipated. The writer’s marvellous wit was lost upon Greifenstein who, in the conscientiousness of his attempt to read well and expressively, confused his own mind to such an extent as to understand very little of what passed his lips. As for Clara, she closed her eyes and leaned back in her chair, scarcely knowing what her mind was dwelling on, but con-

scious of an added horror in her miserable life, so great that all before seemed well-nigh insignificant. She tried to listen from time to time, but her husband's voice sounded as though it were far away, reaching her through some muffling medium that intervened between her and him.

The clock of the castle struck ten, and Greifenstein closed the book with a sort of military precision when he reached the end of the sentence he was reading. Clara roused herself to thank him.

‘It has been so good of you!’ she said. ‘I have enjoyed it very much.’

‘We will read every evening, until you are better,’ answered her husband with great determination. And he kept his word, although his plan for diverting the poor lady was not attended with much success.

Night after night he took his seat by the fire, exactly half an hour after the evening meal was ended. Night after night Clara sat with half-closed eyes, hearing his wooden voice, as in a dream, and wondering how all would end. There was no

change in their lives or habits beyond the introduction of what Greifenstein called the amusement of his wife. It was all the same, the monotonous succession of morning and evening, of night and noon and evening again. Possibly the lives of these two persons might have continued to crawl along in the narrow channel they had made for themselves during many years more, if the events which had been so long preparing had been retarded; for Greifenstein was a man of habit in everything, incapable of weariness in the performance of what he considered to be his duty, and Clara's really strong health might have carried her through half a lifetime of exasperating stagnation. Indeed, if things altered at all after the conversation about her state, the change was for the better. A fictitious calm descended upon the old house, and a certain gentleness found its way into the relations of the couple which was agreeable to both. With Clara this was the result of exhaustion and despair. She felt herself wholly unable to bear any great disaster

should it fall upon her, and she was grateful to her husband, and prayed, if she prayed at all, that both might die peacefully during those days. She even had a vague belief that Heaven would not really bring about that hideous catastrophe that haunted her dreams, and that forced her to dream of it when she was waking. Had she not been a faithful wife to the stern, grey man who had sat opposite to her for five and twenty years? Had she not been a fairly good mother to Greif, if not very loving, nor very wise, at least what people call a good mother? Her conscience told her that, at least, and she felt how great a comfort it was to think that she had not been wholly bad. Moreover, she had been placed in strange circumstances when she had done the deed, whatever it was, and if she had not been as young at that time as she had pretended to be, she had yet not been so old as to understand thoroughly what she was doing. Heaven would surely not be so unkind as to visit upon her now the sins of her youth; now, when a quarter

of a century of peaceful married life had intervened between that day and this ; now, when Greif himself was grown to a man's estate and was to be married in his turn. Surely, there was mercy for her. But if there were none, if Heaven were to be more just than kind, what would become of her? The thin blood beat in her hollow temples as she thought of it, and then sank back suddenly to the tired heart whence it had risen. Above all else, the thought of Greif was unbearable. He, too, must know, if anything were known. He, too, would turn upon her, and force her to drain the last dregs of the death-draught. But she still believed and hoped, hoped and believed, that the day would never come.

And yet it was at hand, now, after all those months of agonising fear, just when she deluded herself with the sweet thought that it might never come at all. Greifenstein came home in the dusk one afternoon, and found a letter upon his desk in his own room. He broke the seal and read it while his teeth ground upon each other, and his

face turned grey. He did not utter a sound, he did not strike his forehead nor clench his fist, nor fall into a chair. He only stiffened his neck a little and stood silently gazing at the fire. After a moment's reflexion, he tossed the letter into the flames and waited until it was quite burnt. Then he rang the bell.

‘Listen, Jacob,’ he said to the servant who came, and his voice did not tremble. ‘A friend of mine has written to say that he is coming to the forest to shoot. He comes alone, as I go myself. It is bad weather, and he may find his way here at any hour. When he presents himself, bring him immediately to this room and send for me. I will not go far from the castle until he arrives.’

The servant asked the gentleman's name.

‘Herr Brandt,’ answered Greifenstein without hesitation.

The letter had informed him that Rieseneck's application to be included in the amnesty had been absolutely refused, and

that he had fled a second time under an assumed name. He appealed to his brother to help him over the frontier to Constance, and said that he might arrive at any time after his letter.

When he was alone, Greifenstein sat down to consider the situation, after carefully filling and lighting the pipe his son had brought him at his last visit. He was in the habit of doing this every day when he came home, and it seemed to him that to omit any detail of his ordinary life would be to show an amount of emotion quite unworthy of himself. It was one of those small acts, performed alone, which are the truest indications of a man's character. If he was not able to smoke his pipe as usual, it must be because he was unable to bear calmly what had come upon him, and consequently was not fit to meet his wife at dinner without betraying his anxiety. It was not an act that showed indifference, as many would think. On the contrary, it was the expression of his indomitably conscientious nature. To change one small thing in his demeanour, even when

he was alone, would have been to begin badly and at a disadvantage.

He scrupulously put his feet upon the same spot on the fender at which they usually rested when he came home, he sat in his accustomed attitude, and he smoked with his accustomed solemnity. It would be a mistake to exaggerate the importance which Rieseneck's coming had in his eyes, as far as any material consequences to himself were concerned. There was no ruin before him, no inevitable disaster. He dreaded the moral side of the incident, and worst of all the possibility of his being obliged to tell Clara of the existence of his disgraced brother. He knew well enough that the newspapers would contain an account of Rieseneck's attempt, and he feared lest some journalist with a long memory should recall the fact of the relationship. Like most men who have formerly lived in a capital, he fancied that every one still knew him, and respected him, and he attached immense importance to the mere mention of his name. That he should be called the brother of a

disgraced and criminal officer in a journal, seemed to him a terrible calamity, an almost unbearable blow to his pride. He did not guess that he was as really forgotten as though he had been twenty years dead. The days when he had worn a uniform seemed very near to him still, and he could not realise that his own youth could seem so distant to those who had once known him. His whole nature revolted against the thought of meeting Rieseneck, and though he was not troubled by an active imagination he could not help thinking of the bitter words he would use in the interview. There was nothing cynical in his moral composition. To him, honour was a fact and not a prejudice, a priceless possession of his own, a household idol for which he was at all times ready to sacrifice every other consideration. The existence of his brother was a rent in the wholeness of that fact, a flaw in his title to that possession, a stain upon the divinity of that domestic god. Greifenstein was very unhappy, and his trouble took the form of resentment against the offender, rather than

of a mild and harmless self-pity. He was hindered from forgetting and he would not forgive, for the injury was real, as he saw it. In crowded cities men have other things to do than to trouble their peace concerning ideals. A neighbour, a friend, a relation, falls into overwhelming disgrace—they pause a minute and then pass on, reflecting with all the certainty gained by long experience, that the world will soon forget, and that, after all is said, their brother's infamy is no concern of theirs. But when men who are scrupulously honourable themselves, and who respect their own family traditions of honour more than anything else on earth, are shut off from the world for many years, they cannot look at such matters as city folks do. The less they have to do, the more they think of their household history, and the greater is the pride they feel in reviewing the biography of their race. A sort of mediæval twilight descends upon their latter years, and their souls receive the heraldic vision. They brood gloomily over the misdeeds of some long-dead ancestor, and their faces glow when

they think of their crusading forefathers. They fight again the battles of long ago, they charge with Welf or Weiblingen, they follow the Kaiser to his coronation in imperial Rome, they strive through the press of knights, they perish with Conradin in Naples, they prick hotly after the standard of the great Rudolf, they kill and riot throughout the Thirty Years' War, they shed their heart's blood with Frederick, they fall at Austerlitz, they rise at Leipzig, they are with Blücher at Waterloo, with 'Unser Fritz' at Königgrätz, with Schmettow's gallant cuirassiers in the deadly ride of Mars la Tour, and they land themselves each evening before the carved escutcheon of the old chimney-piece at home, the proud descendants of a race of heroes known to fame. And yet, though all be true from first to last, fame knows little of them. Who remembers their names? Their fathers for ages were gentlemen like themselves, never very great or powerful, sometimes poor, almost insignificant in the great throng of light-hearted soldiers on whose necks em-

pires have rested, and by whose hands kingdoms have been overthrown. Probably not one of all those dead knights ever felt half the pride in himself that is felt in him by his representative in the nineteenth century, nor experienced half as much pleasure in gazing at his battered shield with its half-defaced cognisance, as now brings the blood to his descendant's cheek as he looks at the carved stone semblance of the original. In the trained sight of this modern gentleman, the past is more real than its own reality was long ago; he is more loyal than the law, more royalist than the king, more protestant than Luther, more conservative than a Chinese sage. An insinuation against any member of his race, though he have been dead since the first Crusade, is a direct insult to himself, to be wiped out by personal combat. His sleeping passions, if roused, take but one direction, to fight for something, his king, his religion or his honour. His memories and his prejudices are complicated, interwoven and entangled beyond all belief; his character is simple, for his only principle

is that those prejudices and traditions are alike infallible and unassailable, and that no sacrifice must be spared in defending them. Such is the old-fashioned German country gentleman, and such was Hugo von Greifenstein.

Rieseneck, a traitor to his country, the betrayer of a military trust, condemned, a fugitive and publicly infamous, was about to enter the sacred place of his brother's idols. For a few hours at least he was to abide under the roof which sheltered such precious memories. His abominable presence was to defile the honourable dwelling of all the Greifensteins. Worse than that, his execrated name was to be coupled with that of Greifenstein himself in the public prints. Matters could not be worse, in the estimation of the iron-grey man who sat solemnly smoking his pipe before the fire, and straining every faculty to maintain his usual composure even in his solitude.

The situation seemed unbearable, and yet it must be borne. Every moment was in all likelihood bringing Rieseneck nearer, every

minute might be the last before his coming. There was nothing to be done. Greifenstein had not even the diversion of making preparations for the man's hurried journey, since any show of preparation might be detrimental to the scheme. His plan was to start in the early dawn of the next morning with guns and dogs as though for a shooting expedition, to ride as far as possible, then to leave the horses and to cross the frontier into Switzerland. Nothing could be easier, and he knew that Rieseneck was aware of the fact from his knowledge of the locality. Moreover it was probable that although the application for pardon had been refused, no attempt would be made to arrest the fugitive. He would be allowed to leave the country unmolested, as it would be considered impolitic to increase the scandal by consigning him again to the fortress whence he had escaped so many years before. Greifenstein had nothing to fear for himself, and he cared nothing what became of his brother, provided that he were not caught. Nevertheless, he suffered extremely while he

waited, for he dreaded the meeting, as he could not have dreaded any material danger.

He was making a calculation with the object of fixing some limit of time within which Rieseneck must arrive, and he came to the conclusion that the catastrophe could not be far distant. Rieseneck would probably come to the nearest railway station by train from Stuttgardt, and walk thence to Greifenstein, leaving any luggage he might have with him to be forwarded after he had made good his escape. In that case, if he had started on the day when he wrote, his coming might be only retarded a little by the fact of his being on foot, whereas the lad who brought the post was mounted.

A knock at the door interrupted his reflexions. Something told him that Rieseneck was at hand, but he turned his head with studied calmness so that he could see the servant's face, and held his pipe steadily between his teeth.

‘Herr Brandt has arrived,’ said the man, quietly, as though nothing unusual were occurring. Greifenstein, even in that

moment, had the courage to scrutinise the attendant's features, but their expression betrayed no suspicion.

‘Show him in,’ returned the master of the house in unshaken tones. He rose slowly to his feet and stood with his back to the fire. The light of the flames was far brighter than that of the solitary lamp that stood upon the desk, and threw the vast black shadow of Greifenstein's gaunt frame against the opposite wall, so that it towered up like a spectre of fate from the floor to the carved brown beams of the ceiling.

The servant threw the door wide open and stood aside, as a tall old man entered the room.

END OF VOL. I

PS
1455
G7
1889
v.1

Crawford, Francis Marion
Greifenstein

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

UTL AT DOWNSVIEW



D RANGE BAY SHLF POS ITEM C
39 13 13 01 16 001 4